



5 WAYS YOU CAN  
**MAKE A DIFFERENCE**  
TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Dr. Josh Moody



**“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. ‘YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A TOWN BUILT ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN.’”  
MATTHEW 5:13-14**

Jesus tells us that we are the salt of the earth, and we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14). He does not tell us that we need to become change agents (salt or light); he tells us we are change agents. In ancient times, salt was primarily used not as an aid to taste but as a preservative. Jesus is saying that we are the global moral preservatives. And then, as now, light shone in dark places to show us the way to go. He is saying that we are the global spiritual illuminators. He also tells us it's possible to hide our light under a bowl, and while chemically salt cannot lose its saltiness, salt then (and now) could get ruined by having other elements to it. So, our saltiness and our light-i-ness can get ruined by either hiding and not speaking out (light under a bowl) or being corrupted by non-Christian behavior and thoughts (losing our saltiness). So then, how can we make a real difference in our world?



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## 1. FOLLOW JESUS

The text in Matthew 5:13-14 is preceded by Jesus' famous teaching in the Beatitudes. There, he describes how to become a Christian and the characteristics of a true Christian. It is these people who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Not anyone, specifically these followers of his, who are the global moral preservatives and global spiritual illuminators. So, if you want your life to count for something, if you want to make a real and substantive difference, the first step is wholeheartedly and unreservedly to give your life to give your life to Jesus.

# DIGGING DEEPER



## ***Matthew 5:13-14***

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.”

***What stands out to you in these verses?***

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***Matthew 5:13: salt. Used for flavoring and preserving (cf. Mk 9:50 and note). loses its saltiness. Most of the salt used in Israel came from the Dead Sea and was full of impurities. This caused it to lose some of its flavor.”***  
***- NIV Study Bible Notes***





Matthew 5:14: light of the world. Although Jesus himself fulfilled the mission of the Lord's servant to be "a light for the Gentiles" (Isa 42:6; see also Lk 2:32 and notes on Isa 49:6; Lk 2:31), he expected his followers to carry on the work (see vv. 15–16; cf. Jn 8:12; Php 2:15 and notes).

- NIV Study Bible Notes

Look up, and write out the following verses, mentioned in the above study notes, below:

Isaiah 42:6

Luke 2:32

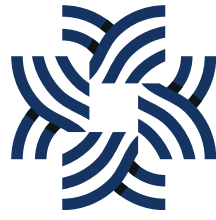
Isaiah 49:6

Luke 2:31

Matthew 5:15-16

John 8:12

Philippians 2:15



## 2. STOP HIDING

It's very easy in our days of political correctness to keep our light under a bowl. Certainly, prudence is sensible. Jesus also tells his followers to be shrewd (Matthew 10:16). A whole book of the Bible is devoted to the importance of wisdom (the book of Proverbs). There is seldom any advantage to be gained for acting in foolhardy and unnecessarily risky ways. But, that said, it is a temptation for many of us – when speaking out on simple Biblical truths can get us into hot water – to hide. Will we say that Jesus is the and the only way to be saved? We will tell people that we go to church? We will bring up our children to follow the Bible's teaching on sexual ethics? We will avoid the petty larceny and unethical behavior that goes on behind the scenes in many businesses? We will duck when the next chance comes to speak out, or will we actually say something?

# DIGGING DEEPER



“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.” - Matthew 10:16



**Take note of the different translations and paraphrases of this verse below. Underline, circle or highlight what stands out to you.**

## Amplified Version

A Hard Road before Them

“Listen carefully: I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be wise as serpents, and innocent as doves [have no self-serving agenda].”

## The Message

“Stay alert. This is hazardous work I’m assigning you. You’re going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don’t call attention to yourselves. Be as shrewd as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.”

## The Voice

“Listen: I am sending you out to be sheep among wolves. You must be as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves.”

## English Standard Version

Persecution Will Come

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

## New Living Translation

“Look, I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. So be as shrewd as snakes and harmless as doves.”

## New King James Version

Persecutions Are Coming

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”





# REFLECT



**Which version/paraphrase stood out to you the most and why?**

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***What words/phrases did you note, circle, or underline?***

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### 3. STAY DISTINCT

Here, in many ways, the church has missed the boat. We have spent 30-plus years telling Christians that we need to be more up-to-date. Granted, I'll be the first to say that there is nothing spiritual about having out-of-date décor, worship that is not excellent, or organizational practices that are not stellar. In that sense, there is a lot to be learned from all sorts of other leaders and organizations. However, the church has not recently emphasized distinctiveness. What attracts people to church is not that we are the same as everything else but that we are different from it. Salt will not be salty if it is corrupted by morally tarnished attitudes, doctrines drawn from current philosophies, not from the Bible, and spiritually pluralistic tendencies. That kind of salt is not really good for anything. It will need to be thrown on the trash heap. Let us not be like that! Stay distinct.



# REFLECT

**1**

When you think of church, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

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**2**

What do you enjoy about church?

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**3**

Do you feel comfortable inviting someone who has never been to church before to your church? Why or why not?

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# DIGGING DEEPER



*Read the following passages in the Bible that describe God's intention for the church.*

## **Acts 2:42-47**

*"All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.*

*A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved."*



## **1 Timothy 3:14-15**

*"I am writing these things to you now, even though I hope to be with you soon, so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth."*





## 4. INVEST IN THE CHURCH

The one institution that will last for eternity is the church. This (the local church) is the “city on a hill [which] cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14). It’s this great insight that drove the famous Augustine to write “The City of God.” Essentially, his argument throughout his magnum opus was that the church (not Rome) was the city – it was the city of God. As the Roman Empire crumbled and weakened, as that city became evidently weak, so Augustine wrote to persuade his readers that the city in which they should invest their lives was the city of God, that is, the church. This, of course, is also the lesson of Noah in the Old Testament. As God brings his judgment to the world, Noah is told to build a boat to be a rescue agent for his family and creation. What is the New Testament equivalent? The church! That’s why medieval cathedrals are built like upturned boats. So, with our lives, our time, and finances, invest not in any kind of “city” (or polis, using the Latin name for the city) but in the city of God, the church!

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.” - Matthew 5:14

# DIGGING DEEPER



## MATTHEW 5:14

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.”

## HALLEY’S BIBLE HANDBOOK NOTES

“That is, preserver and guide. Jesus Himself is the light of the world (John 8:12). His followers reflect His light and glory. The grandest motive a person can have is that his or her manner of life will lead others to glorify God.”

## JOHN 8:12

“Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, ‘I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.’”





# REFLECT

After learning about what it means to be salt and light on this earth, reflect on how you can challenge yourself and others around you to grow in this aspect of your faith.

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Think about your involvement in your local church and how it helps you live out your faith daily, as salt and light on this earth. In what ways are you doing that already, and in what ways can you increase your participation in service at your church and in your community?

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## 5. DO GOOD

The emphasis on moral performance is one that gives shivers up the spine to some Protestants/evangelicals because of the wrong theology of good works that the Reformation reacted against. No, good works will not save us. But, as the apostle Paul emphasizes in his letter to Titus, we are to be active in doing good. Jesus tells us that as our light shines, they will “see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” In a day when many think that Christianity is bad news and filled with bad actors, it is imperative that we continue to be zealous for good works. To care for the orphan. To stand up for the unborn. To love all regardless of creed, race, or class. This is how the ancient church, in the end, won over the Roman Empire: they matched their message (the “light,” if you will) with their lifestyle (the “salt”). It became obvious that the citizens you most wanted in your city were those who did such good works. More and more people have turned to follow Christ and, therefore, have given God glory.





# DIGGING DEEPER

Reflect on the following verses. Though good works do not save us, but by the free gift of God's grace through salvation in Christ Jesus, it's still important to visibly live differently as Christians.

**Titus 3:14**

"Our people must learn to do good by meeting the urgent needs of others; then they will not be unproductive."

**Matthew 5:16**



"In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

**James 1:22**

"But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves."

**James 2:14-26**



What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?



So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, "How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds."



You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can't you see that faith without good deeds is useless?



Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was shown to be right with God by his actions when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith." He was even called the friend of God. So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.

Rahab the prostitute is another example. She was shown to be right with God by her actions when she hid those messengers and sent them safely away by a different road. Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.



# REFLECT

How does your life bring glory to God?

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How can your actions show the love of Christ to others?

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# NOTES

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## SOURCES

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Josh Moody (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) is the Senior Pastor of College Church in Wheaton and the President of God Centered Life Ministries. He is the author of many books, including the forthcoming Joy of Jesus: 25 Devotional Readings for Christmas (Christian Focus 2024); Authentic Spirituality (CLC Publications 2022); and Everyday Holiness: Becoming Who You Were Made to Be (Christian Focus 2022). Join him and Neil Shenvi for The Word Conference 2024.