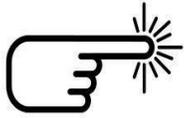


MATTHEW 5: 1-13

“SALT OF THE EARTH”



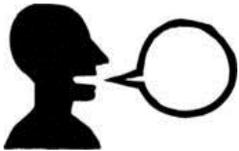
SUPPLIES: Jelly beans for illustration (the more flavors, the better!)

Ask students to turn off cell phones.

Ask a student to hand out Bibles to everyone.

Welcome any new students and take time for introductions.

Ask if any student wants to open in prayer (remind them that simple is best!).



Have students guess various flavors of jelly beans by its taste/flavor only. If you need to, blindfold them or ask them to close their eyes while picking out jelly beans from bag/bowl.

SCRIPTURE:

Have students turn to Matthew 5:1-13 and ask a volunteer to read.

Verses 1-12 - “Blessed”

(ASK: “What do you think the word ‘blessed’ means?”)

- Despite popular belief, it does not mean “happy” (those who are mourning are not happy).
- It literally means “congratulations to” and reflects God’s estimate rather than human emotion.
- It refers to the ultimate well-being and distinctive spiritual joy of those who are part of God’s kingdom.

(ASK: “Which of these saying is the most challenging to you and why?” Give students a few minutes to look at the passage and decide which Beatitude stands out to them, and then have them explain why they chose the one they chose.)

Verse 13 - “You are the Salt of the earth”

- The word “you” is **emphatic**, meaning Jesus placed a strong emphasis on the word.
- Jesus made it abundantly clear that *every* believer is a representative of the kingdom.
- Believers have a duty to the world.
- When salt loses its ability to enhance flavor, it loses its **effectiveness**. It is insipid, flat.
- “Lost its taste” = *defiled*
- Most salt used in Israel was from the Dead Sea and was full of impurities. This caused it to lose some of its flavor.

DEAD SEA FUN FACTS...

1. The Dead Sea isn't actually a sea at all! The Dead Sea is a saltwater lake.
2. Hence the name, there is no marine life in the Dead Sea. The high mineral and salt content of the water makes it impossible for fish or plants to live.
3. The Dead Sea is the second saltiest body of water in the world, with a salt content of 33%.
4. You can lay on the surface of the water without even trying to float. The high salt content makes you buoyant.
5. Water flows into the Dead Sea from streams and rivers, but does not flow out.
6. Dead Sea salt is super bitter and not at all like table salt.
7. The Dead Sea is filled with minerals including calcium, iodine, saline, potassium, and bromide.
8. Centuries ago, one of the popular names of the Dead Sea was "The Stinky Sea".
9. Asphalt often rises to the surface of the water in the Dead Sea. The Greeks called it "Lake Asphaltites" after the strange phenomenon.
10. The shores of Dead Sea mark the lowest elevation on earth.

CONSIDER THIS...

- Pure salt maintains its flavor but, ironically, some followers of Christ lost their saltiness. The only way for pure salt to lose its flavor is to mix it with other chemicals. It still looks like salt but it has lost its saltiness. We lose our testimony in the world if we mix the truth with other elements.
- Salt that loses its effectiveness is **worthless**. It can neither preserve nor provide taste. It is a worthless agent of change.
- Salt is distinctive.
 - **ASK:** "What is an example of a food that 'comes to life' after salt is added to it?"
- When salt becomes contaminated with minerals like gypsum, for instance, it can no longer function in the way it was intended.
 - **ASK:** "In what ways do you think our world/culture is contaminated?"

SCRIPTURE:

ASK STUDENTS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

Ephesians 4:1 "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Psalms 1:1 "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!"

Leader Notes:

CONSIDER THIS...

- When we live like the rest of the world and allow sin to contaminate us, we lose our distinctiveness. When people hear us joke about the same things they joke about we lose our ability to witness to them. Their first thought would be “Well, I don’t know why Joe’s talking to me about this being wrong. He was laughing at my dirty joke the other day.” When they see us live in a manner that is no different than how they live, they will not take our Gospel message seriously.
- We cannot “be made salty again”...
- When we compromise our witness, we become useless for ministry and are “no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”
- So does that mean we should all just give up? After all, we **do** sin. We **do** make mistakes. We are human.
- Fortunately, with the power God’s Spirit we can grow and become more Christ-like and resist the contamination of the world, even after we’ve gotten caught up in it from time to time.
- God is a God of redemption. There are so many people who profess Jesus publicly, then do something stupid and their reputation goes downhill. With a humble, repentant heart and strength by God’s Spirit, we can be salty again and serve as a witness for God’s power to restore us. We just may not be as “salty” as we were before, and it is true that people may doubt our sincerity.
- What do you think jelly beans have to do with being the salt of the earth...?

CLOSING

Have everyone turn to and help read Romans 12:1-2.

This week, let’s ask God to help us resist the world’s attempts to conform us to its way of doing things and allow Jesus to live through us in our words and our actions. Be distinctive. Be effective. Be salty!



Ask a student to close in prayer. Before the student prays, give everyone a chance to share prayer requests and concerns.

Leader Notes:
