



THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE  
SERMON *on THE* MOUNT  
SESSION 3: STAY SALTY



**LifeGroups**  
Do Life Together

# **New Hope Church**

THE JOURNEY THROUGH SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

SESSION THREE: STAY SALTY

MATTHEW 5:13-37

## **FOLLOW ALONG**

**Create a** \_\_\_\_\_

**Live** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stay** \_\_\_\_\_

## **INTRODUCTION:**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:13-16.

Have you ever been responsible for causing a power outage in your neighborhood?

What was your understanding of the church's mission while growing up?

Do you prefer being in the spotlight or in the background?

Can you recall a moment when you witnessed a good deed and felt it was a reflection of God's presence?

What are the areas in your life where you wish to maintain a greater distance from sin?

Is there any aspect of your life where you wish to do a better job of spreading the message of Christ? Let this be a prayer focus for your LifeGroup.

## Going Deeper

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

What are the benefits of using light and salt? What lessons can you learn about being a Christian from these two images? Is your behavior showing signs of a change in your inner self?

Have you experienced the transformation brought by the gospel message? If yes, please share your salvation story.

These two metaphors for the Christian are appropriate for several reasons. First, both provide a great service to humanity. They are useful and undeniably good for mankind. Salt's preserving quality was invaluable in the ancient world. And it goes without saying that light was essential, as it is today. Christians are to be a blessing to those around them by being witnesses both in word and deed of the one true and living God.

**HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:17-20.**

What did Jesus indicate was His relationship to God's Law? What did He say about people's relationship to God's Law?

What does this mean for the Christian? What does it mean for the non-Christian?

Which do you see when you look at God's Law—an impossible, condemning standard or a joyful blueprint for obedience? Explain your thoughts.

Christians are no longer subject to the condemnation of God's Law as they have been redeemed from its punishment through Christ. On the other hand, those who are not Christians must comply with God's Law completely and continuously, otherwise, they will face guilt. Unfortunately, all people are already guilty of breaking God's Law, and even if they were not, it is impossible for those with a sinful nature to obey it perfectly.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:21-37.

What was the central message that Jesus conveyed to his followers regarding these commandments?

How did these commands convey the message to those who relied on their own righteousness for salvation, rather than being in Christ?

How did these commands reflect Jesus, who came to fulfill God's law?

For Christians, which of these commandments are causing the most difficulty in following? What steps can you take to overcome the temptations to sin? If you are not a Christian, how do you plan to address your inability to follow God's law? How do you plan to deal with sin in your life?

Jesus revealed that the sort of obedience God expected was more robust than what the religious leaders had come to believe. Obedience wasn't meant to be only external actions, but also an internal perspective, not only their hands but also their hearts. They were not only to obey the letter of the law with their hands, but also the spirit of the law by submitting their hearts.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you understand the concept of Jesus' righteousness being applied to the Christian's account? If not, talk with your pastor about this essential Christian doctrine.

What do you see when you look at God's Law? What does that indicate about the state of your soul?

Which of the commandments that Jesus commented on do you find the most applicable to your current situation?

How might joyfully following God's Law enable Christians to point others to the truth about Jesus?

## PRAYER

Give thanks to God for His Law. Thank Him for providing a blueprint by which you can walk in joyful obedience and humble repentance. Rejoice that Jesus kept God's Law perfectly, earning a righteousness that would be applied to the account of all those who would respond to the gospel message with faith and repentance.

## COMMENTARY

### MATTHEW 5:13-37

5:13 Salt has many uses, but in the OT it is most often a purifying agent (Ex 30:35; Lv 2:13; 2Kg 2:21; Ezk 16:4). As the salt of the earth, Jesus's disciples are to purify a corrupt world through their example of righteous living and their proclamation of the gospel. However, contaminated salt does not promote purity. The verb translated "lose its taste" indicates foolish and immoral behavior. It refers to a professing disciple whose unrighteous lifestyle promotes destruction rather than purification. Such salt is only good for spreading over ground where you want to kill vegetation. Such is the fatal effect of an unrighteous disciple's lifestyle. Nothing grows where they go. The verb "thrown out" describes the disposal of something worthless, and the verb "trampled" alludes to the treatment an immoral disciple receives from the world.

5:14-16 "You are the light of the world" is an allusion to Is 9:1-2; 42:6; 49:6—texts that describe the ministry of Messiah, Servant of the Lord. This indicates that Jesus's disciples are to be extensions of his ministry, carrying salvation to the ends of the earth. Such ministry is intrinsic to true discipleship. A disciple should no more conceal his righteousness or the gospel message than a glowing city should douse its light at night. The reference to "giving light for all" combines with the reference to "the world" to show that Christ's ministry is intended for all people. This anticipates the Great Commission of Mt 28:18-20.

Jesus's words make clear that the disciple is not the ultimate author of his good works. If the disciple were the author of his good works, he would justly receive praise. However, Jesus taught that only the Father in heaven is to be praised for a disciple's good works, for he is the true source of such works (see note at v. 6). This must not be overlooked. The righteousness demanded by the Sermon on the Mount is a divine gift that God imparts to Jesus's followers.

5:17-20 Jesus defended himself against charges that he defied the law (9:3,11,14; 12:2,10; 15:1-2; 17:24; 19:3; 22:34-36) by insisting that he came to fulfill both the Law and the Prophets, which together amount to the entire OT. The word "fulfill" may refer to fulfillment of OT prophecies (1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54,56; 27:9). This is suggested by the words "all things are accomplished". However, it can also refer to obedience to God's commands (3:15). This additional meaning is implied by the reference to practicing these commands. Consequently, Jesus's words imply that he would fulfill all of the OT promises and obey all its commandments. The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the yod, which resembles an English apostrophe. The stroke of a letter is a slight pen stroke that distinguishes similar letters. Jesus's statement shows that he regarded the OT as accurate and reliable down to the smallest detail. In keeping with this conviction, Jesus taught that fidelity to the OT witness determines a disciple's stature in his kingdom. True fidelity to God's commands is made possible by God's miraculous work in a disciple's heart (see note at v. 6).

5:21-22 Matthew 5:21 begins a section of the Sermon on the Mount generally known as the "six antitheses." The title may seem to imply that Jesus opposed the OT in some way, but in reality he always upheld its authority. Rather than contradicting or overturning OT teachings, Jesus opposed the misguided interpretations of the scribes and Pharisees. These men were concerned only with superficial matters, but Jesus went deeper. He argued that the law prohibits not just actual murder but murderous attitudes as well. Similarly, violent temperaments are condemned just as surely as violent deeds.

5:23-24 Disciples must attempt at their earliest opportunity to reconcile with a brother or sister who has something against them, even if doing so interrupts important business. Speaking to the context of his day, Jesus said disciples should seek reconciliation even if it meant halting in the middle of offering sacrifices at the Jerusalem temple. This interruption was significant since Jesus's original audience (located away from Jerusalem) would have to abandon their gift at the altar, travel for days to reach Galilee and seek reconciliation, and then return to Judea to complete the sacrifice. Such is the priority of reconciliation.

5:25-26 A person can typically pay a smaller penalty for their offense by seeking an out-of-court settlement rather than waiting for the issue to be settled in court. This illustrates that reconciliation is urgent because the longer it is postponed, the more severe the consequences.

5:27-28 Jesus said that gazing on a member of the opposite sex for the purpose of arousing illicit sexual desire is adultery of the heart. This does not mean lustful thoughts are equally as sinful as the act of adultery. Rather it means the law prohibits adulterous desires as well as adulterous actions. Sin begins in the mind before it is committed outwardly. True righteousness therefore seeks to avoid not only adulterous acts but also adulterous thoughts.

5:29-30 Self-mutilation and amputation are not effective ways to overcome sin. After all, sin arises from a corrupt heart rather than flesh and bone (15:19). Jesus here uses hyperbole (intentional exaggeration for the sake of making a point) and allegory (in which the eye represents a lustful perspective and the hand represents an immoral deed) in order to convey a vital requirement of discipleship. Disciples should put a stop to thoughts and behaviors that contribute to immorality.

5:31-32 Jesus challenged a loose rabbinic paraphrase of Dt 24:1 that distorted the original meaning of the text. In the hands of the rabbis, Dt 24:1 greatly multiplied the number of offenses that could justify divorce. For instance, rabbinic commentaries on Dt 24 cited minor complaints such as a wife's fading beauty or her tendency to burn food as legitimate grounds for divorce. However, Jesus kept true to Dt 24:1 and insisted that sexual immorality is legitimate grounds for divorce. People who divorce for frivolous reasons and remarry are guilty of adultery since their original marriage covenant has not been genuinely dissolved.

5:33-37 Oaths to the Lord (i.e., "I swear to God") were considered binding, but since Jews avoided use of God's personal name and instead used reverent substitutions, clever liars could take an oath that seemed to appeal to God without technically doing so (23:16-22). Jesus taught that swearing oaths is wrong since oaths call for the destruction of an object or person if the oath is broken. Thus, swearing by heaven . . . earth . . . Jerusalem, or even one's own head is inappropriate because it implies that we have the authority to destroy things over which God alone has authority. Swearing against God or his belongings aligns us with the evil one who attempted to assume God's position as ruler of the universe.



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