 How To Become A Disciple Of Jesus Christ

Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount: Study 2

‘Being Salt and Light’ (Matthew 5:13 – 16)

Jesus has instructed his disciples to be *‘the salt of the earth and the light of the world’* (Matthew 5:13 – 16). In his analogy, salt and light are both agents of positive change. When a light is turned on in a darkened room we can see, while salt preserves food and enhances its flavour.

However, in his 1999 book, *‘Chameleon or Tribe’* Richard Keyes describes two negative tendencies that can prevent Christians from acting like salt and light. The first of these is to retreat from or to protest against people in the world who make us feel uncomfortable. To illustrate this, Keyes uses the example of musk oxen who, when threatened, huddle together and kick their hind legs outward against their enemy. Next Keyes turns his attention to the chameleon, which protects itself from perceived threats by blending in with its surrounding environment. The chameleon is a symbol of believers who adopt the patterns of this world and lose the qualities that make them standout as Christians. So how can Christ’s followers keep acting like salt and light as we live in the world and interact with its people?

1. Read Matthew 5:13 – 16. Here Jesus calls his disciples, *‘the salt of the earth’ and ‘the light of the world*.’ What do these symbolic terms mean to you?
2. Jesus warns his disciples, *“If salt loses it’s saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything…”* How might a Christian lose his or her saltiness; and what might this look like in one’s daily life?
3. In verses 14 and 15 Jesus talks about *a city on the hill and a lamp on a stand* (as opposed to a lamp hidden under a bowl). Explain the point that Jesus is making about the visibility of his disciples through these analogies? (i.e. vs. 16). How do we let our good deeds be seen by others without showing off?
4. Why might our good deeds cause others to praise our Heavenly Father? Can you think of an example of this?
5. Jesus is the ultimate source of light in this world and in his disciples’ lives (John 1:1 – 5 and 8:12). Therefore, how can we make sure that it’s Jesus who is being lifted up in our lives, and not just our own good deeds?
6. The final two ‘*Beatitudes*’ of Jesus (from study 1) remind us that living for Jesus may sometimes lead to persecution, rather than producing praise (Matthew 5:10 – 12). How can we keep acting as salt and light in a world that can sometimes be hostile toward our faith in Jesus?