

Lesson 4

Shining Lights

Group Icebreaker:

Have the members of the group move around the room or rooms with their eyes closed. Ask the group the following question, “How did this exercise make you feel?”

Introduction:

The disciples are listening intently as Jesus continues with the Sermon on the Mount. He looks directly at them and declares that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Then with a sweeping gesture of His right hand Jesus points westward. The disciple’s eyes follow until their gaze rests upon the hilltop city of Zefat not eight miles distant as Jesus tells them, “*A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.*”

Reading the Scripture:

Shining Lights
The Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 5:13-16

Scripture excerpts from “Follow Me: A Message from God”

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure¹, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

The Command:

- ❖ Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Group Discussion:

1. Why do you think Jesus calls His disciples the salt of the earth?
 - a. Salt was used as the sign of a covenant. The disciples are to be the sign in the earth that God has made a covenant with men.
 - b. Salt is a preservative that keeps food from decomposition and corruption. The disciples are to preserve people lives and help them remain pure or free from the corruption of sin.
 - c. Salt is a seasoning that adds flavor to life. The disciples should add value to others lives by blessing them.
2. How does salt become tasteless?
 - a. Salt loses its taste through long exposure to air, but only the outer surface becomes tasteless.
 - b. Salt kept in the ground does not lose its taste. The source of the disciples salt should be hidden in the soil of the heart.

¹ Peck-measure. A bowl or basket.

- c. Salt in the heart is indicative of the wisdom of God that resides within an individual. The salt in the heart is sprinkled by the speaking of words. The Catholic Church still baptizes many children by placing salt on their lips or in their mouths as a sign that the wisdom of God is residing within.
3. How would you let a person know that he was blind?
4. What are some things that light does?
 - a. Light dispels darkness.
 - b. Light exposes things that are hidden.
 - c. Light enables people to see. They are able to coordinate activities to get what they need.
 - d. Light assists people in identifying what things are.

The Lesson:

As the disciples listen to Jesus speak these words about light, questions begin to form in their minds. Why is Jesus calling them the light of the world? What light do they have? How can they let this light shine so that people can glorify God in heaven? What is Jesus talking about? As the disciples grew to maturity the answers to their questions would come.

When Jesus issued this command to His disciples He referred to “your light.” The disciples discovered that the only light they had was Jesus, Himself. The Apostle John wrote about this in the opening statement of his gospel. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the **light** of men. And the **light** shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came for a witness, **that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.**”* The Apostle John also recorded a statement Jesus made concerning Himself. It reads like this. *“Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the **light** of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the **light** of life.’”²*

Jesus calls His disciples the light of the world. The reason for that is that they believed in Him and proclaimed the way of salvation. The Apostle Paul develops this point further in his epistle to the Philippians. *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as **lights** in the world, **holding fast the word of life**, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.”³*

Jesus told His disciples that they should let their light shine in such a way that people could see their good works. These good works would in turn then cause people to praise God. To understand what good works are requires insight, because if men do their own good works, they are praised for them not God.

The first clue to understanding what good works are, is found in Matthew 19:16-17. *“And behold, one came to Jesus and said, ‘Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?’”*

² John 8:12

³ Philippians 2:4-16

And Jesus said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." Jesus equates goodness with God alone! Therefore, good works are those performed by God not men.

Men are doing well when they are declaring God's works. That is righteousness! Two of the Psalms make this point abundantly clear. Psalm 73:28 says, "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all Thy works." Psalm 78:4 declares, "We will not conceal them from their children, but tell to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done."

The final clue is found in John 6:28-29. The multitudes asked Jesus, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." Scriptures show that good works consists of believing in Jesus Christ and declaring what God has done.

The Apostle Paul summarized these points in 2 Corinthians 4:4-6. "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.** For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." The apostles did not declare their own works but only their servant-hood. They preached Christ Jesus as Lord and the light shone forth when they preached.

Group Discussion:

5. In His discourse to the disciples about the light, Jesus holds out the possibility that light can be hidden. Do Christians hide their light and if so, why? (Proverbs 24:11-12)
6. In John 3:18-20, Jesus declares that people do not come to the light but prefer darkness because their deeds are evil. In view of His statement what are your responsibilities as the light? (Ephesians 5:11-12)

The Point of the Lesson:

Your light shines when you bring the testimony of Jesus to others.

Application:

Be salt and light. Either initiate a testimony that Jesus Christ is Lord or help someone to understand that they are blind. Report what happened in the next group meeting.

Discipleship Lessons by Verse

Book 1

“Fishers of Men”

John 1:35-51, Luke 5:1-11, 27-28, Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9, Mark 1:16-20, 2:14

Lesson 1

John 4:1-42

Lesson 2

Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 6:20-26

Lesson 3

Matthew 5:13-16

Lesson 4

Mathew 5:17-20

Lesson 5

Matthew 5:21-26

Lesson 6

Matthew 5:27-32

Lesson 7

Matthew 5:33-37

Lesson 8

Matthew 5:38-42, Luke 6:29-30

Lesson 9

Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-28, 31-35

Lesson 10

Matthew 6:1-18

Lesson 11

Matthew 6:9-15

Lesson 12

Matthew 6:19-23

Lesson 13

Matthew 7:1-5, Luke 6:36-42

Lesson 14

Matthew 7:6

Lesson 15

Matthew 7:7-14

Lesson 16

Matthew 7:15-29, Luke 6:43-49

Lesson 17

Learn what Jesus teaches us to do, what it means and how it is applied to our lives today as we walk by the Spirit!

Fishers of Men . . . introduces Christians to the subject of becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and covers the first 17 lessons He taught His disciples. Beginning with His command to “Follow Me,” Jesus lays a solid foundation of instructions for developing the character of Christ within individuals.

- *Jesus’ teachings have completely transformed my life. (M.M.)*
- *Jesus invites you to walk with Him and learn from Him. (J.G.)*
- *I have been going to church for over 30 years and have never heard anything like this before. Why don’t churches teach this? (J.R.)*

Upon coming to faith in Jesus Christ at age 33, Michael Gibson earnestly wanted someone to disciple him in the faith. Finding no one . . . he became a student, and then teacher of God’s word.

One statement in particular captured his attention, “Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20) From that he wrote his first book, “Follow Me” (1996), a compilation of the four gospels into one account while highlighting each of the 263 instructions Jesus commanded His disciples to do and teach. Subsequently, he has written the three-part teaching series, “A Journey with Jesus” and many other books which help equip believers to do the work of the ministry.

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