

Study Guide: Sermon on the Mount: (Lesson 49)

December 7, 2025

This study guide is designed to review and reinforce the key concepts presented in Lesson 49 of the study on the Sermon on the Mount, focusing on Matthew 5:14-16. The lesson emphasizes the Christian's identity and mandate to be "salt and light" in a world characterized by decay and darkness.

Key Themes and Concepts

This sermon explores the profound responsibility of believers to influence the world for Jesus Christ. The core message is built upon several foundational truths.

- **The World's Condition:** The sermon presupposes that the world is in a state of decay and darkness. It is likened to a vast wheat field where people are lost, unable to see above the "wheat of the world," and perishing in the "night of sin." This condition establishes the urgent need for Christian influence.
- **The Christian Mandate:** Based on Matthew 5, Jesus Christ is not suggesting that His followers *should* be salt and light; He is stating their identity. According to the lesson, the original Greek implies, "You are the *only* salt, you are the *only* light." This is a divine job for the whole church to "join hands" and find the lost.
- **The Prerequisite of Character:** The call to be salt and light directly follows the Beatitudes. The character traits described in the Beatitudes are what make a Christian distinct from the world. Without this Christ-like character, any attempt to witness will be ineffective and may "besmirch the name of Christ."
- **The Duality of Witness: Salt and Light:** The plan for Christian influence has two balanced components:
 - **Salt:** Represents the quiet, hidden, and powerful influence of a Christian's character—their "silent testimony." Like an antiseptic, it works from the inside to retard and push back against the world's corruption. However, salt can only slow decay; it cannot transform it.
 - **Light:** Represents the open, visible communication of the Gospel's content. It is the spoken, overt testimony that shines on the outside. While salt influences, light transforms corruption into incorruption. This involves both godly conduct and speaking the truth of God, His Word, and His Son.
- **The Integrated Life:** For an effective witness, what a Christian *does* (living a righteous life like salt) and what they *say* (speaking the truth like light) must go together. The sermon references Acts 1:1, noting that the account was about all that Jesus began to both "do and teach."
- **The Reality of Persecution:** The sermon explicitly states that the world will hate, persecute, revile, and lie about Christians. This is not a possibility but an expectation. Believers are called not to hide in a "protective mode" but to confront the world, just as Jesus engaged with sinners and outcasts.

Short-Answer Quiz

Instructions: Based on the lesson, answer the following questions in two to three sentences.

1. What is the central message of the story about the lost boy in the Kansas wheat field?
2. Why does the sermon emphasize that the call to be salt and light comes *after* the Beatitudes?
3. What specific danger does the speaker warn against regarding Christians becoming too comfortable in their own fellowship?
4. In the context of the sermon, what is the primary difference between the function of "salt" and the function of "light"?
5. According to the lesson, what is the main limitation of salt's effectiveness in the world?
6. The speaker references the opening of the Book of Acts. What two elements of Jesus' ministry are highlighted as essential for Christians to emulate?
7. What three things comprise the "light" that Christians are supposed to shine on the world?
8. How is the football coach's motto, "Let's dominate," applied to the Christian's role in the world?
9. According to the sermon, how should Christians expect the world to react to their presence and message?
10. At the end of the sermon, what practical and symbolic action was offered to help people remove hindrances to being a light for Christ?

Answer Key

1. The story of the lost boy parallels the state of lost people in the world. They are unable to find their way to the Father's house and are perishing, highlighting the urgency for the church to "join hands" and search for them before it is too late.
2. The Beatitudes describe the essential character of a believer. The sermon stresses that one must first possess this distinct, godly character before attempting to influence the world, otherwise they will look just like the world and their witness will be ineffective.
3. The speaker warns against the danger of Christians becoming so happy in their "ivory tower" of fellowship that they fail to fulfill their mission. They risk not joining hands to "sweep through the world" to find the lost.
4. Salt is the hidden, internal influence of a Christian's character, which works secretly to retard corruption. Light is the open, external communication of the Gospel, which works visibly to transform the world.
5. Salt's limitation is that it can only retard or hold back corruption. It cannot change corruption into incorruption; that transformation is the work of the "light of the gospel."
6. Referencing Acts 1:1, the speaker highlights that the account of Jesus' life included both what He *did* and what He *taught*. These two elements—living the life (action) and speaking the truth (words)—must go together for a Christian's witness to be complete.
7. The "light" Christians are to shine involves telling people about God, about His Word (the Bible), and about His Son, Jesus Christ. This light must be spoken and lived.
8. The motto is used to illustrate the concept of "dominion." The speaker explains that Christians are God's plan to dominate the world, not through worldly power, but by influencing it for His glory with godliness, righteousness, and holiness.
9. Christians should expect the world to hate and persecute them. The sermon states that the world will revile them and "say all manner of evil against us falsely."
10. The speaker invited congregants to write down any sin in their life that was preventing them from shining their light. They were then to place the paper in a box, symbolically giving that burden to the Lord to be done with it.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Consider the following questions for deeper reflection on the sermon's themes. Formulate a comprehensive response based on the concepts presented in the lesson.

1. Analyze the sermon's central metaphor of Christians needing to "join hands and sweep through the field of the world." Discuss the implications of this imagery for both individual responsibility and the collective mission of the church.

2. The speaker argues that being "salt and light" is a statement of identity ("You are"), not a suggestion. Based on the sermon, explore how this understanding should shape a believer's perspective on their purpose, their interaction with the world, and their reliance on God.
3. Elaborate on the relationship between a Christian's "silent testimony" (salt) and their "spoken testimony" (light). Using principles from the sermon, explain why one without the other creates an incomplete and ineffective witness.
4. The sermon directly addresses the "fallacies of the church today," including the tendency to remain in a "protective mode." Discuss the speaker's argument for why Christians must confront the world, even in the face of persecution, and what is lost when they do not.
5. Examine the connection made between personal sin and the reluctance to be a "light." How does the sermon explain this phenomenon, and what solution does it offer for believers to regain their effectiveness as witnesses for Jesus Christ?

Glossary of Key Terms

| Term | Definition from the Source Context |
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| Antiseptic | Used to describe the function of salt; believers are to be an antiseptic in the world, working to retard and push back on corruption. |
| Beatitudes | The principles and qualities that Jesus Christ has shown for how believers are supposed to live their lives. They describe the character that makes a Christian distinct and effective for God. |
| Character | The distinctiveness of a Christian, described in the Beatitudes. It is the quiet, powerful influence (salt) that makes it possible to affect the world. |
| Corruption | The state of decay and sin that characterizes the world. Salt can only retard corruption, while the light of the Gospel can transform it. |
| Disciples | The audience to whom Jesus is speaking in the Sermon on the Mount and, by extension, all followers of Christ who are called to be salt and light. |
| Dominion | The authority and plan for believers to influence and "dominate" the world for God's glory through righteousness and holiness. |
| Gospel | The content of Christian communication. Being "light" involves communicating the content of the Gospel. |
| Incorruption | The state of being transformed from decay and sin. The light of the Gospel performs this transformation. |

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| Light | The open, visible, and spoken communication of the Gospel. It represents the overt testimony of a believer's words and godly conduct, intended to transform the world. |
| Persecution | The expected hostile reaction from the world towards Christians, which includes hatred, reviling, and false accusations. |
| Presupposition | An assumed truth that serves as a starting point. The sermon's presupposition is that the world is in a condition of decay and darkness. |
| Salt | The silent, hidden influence of a Christian's character and godly life. It acts as a preservative to retard the world's moral and spiritual decay. |
| Sermon on the Mount | The discourse from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew that contains the Beatitudes and the teaching on being salt and light. |
| Witness | The combination of a Christian's life and words. A complete witness requires both living righteously (salt) and speaking truth (light). |

Referenced Greek Name

The source text references an individual to whom the Book of Acts was addressed. This name is of Greek origin.

- **Theophilis**¹ (theh-o'-fil-os): A Greek name meaning "friend of God." He is the recipient to whom Luke addressed both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts.

¹ ΘΕΟΦΙΛΟΣ