



When I was young, I didn't understand what it meant to have a relationship with God through Jesus.

Neither of my parents were followers of Jesus, and the only exposure I had to God was attending a Catholic grammar school and high school.

I saw Christianity as a religion filled with ancient rules and rituals. I didn't relate.

Around the age of 19, I started searching for God. I had a friend in college who had recently surrendered his life to Jesus.

I noticed something different about him. Something had changed, but I didn't know what. I started hanging out with him more often.

He introduced me to a bunch of his new friends, who were all Christians. Some were young people, some were married with kids, and some were old.

I instantly saw something unique in all of these people. They went out of their way to selflessly serve other people. They affirmed and encouraged each other. Married couples seemed to genuinely love each other (a new experience for me). They accepted me as I was, and at that time I had a LOT of issues (I'm still a work in progress).

I wanted to know why they were different, and after spending some time with them discovered the answer. They were Christians. They followed Jesus. They had a personal relationship with the God of the universe. They were different because of Jesus.

Over the period of about 6 months I continued to search for God. I listened to what it meant to follow and surrender your life to Jesus, but what really hooked me was how different this new group of people were. I soon decided to follow Jesus. From that point on everything changed. Everything.

We all have our story of how we came to follow Jesus. That's mine. Yours is probably different, or maybe it's similar.

One of the most powerful ways the students in your ministry can communicate the message of Jesus is by how they live their lives.

Jesus calls us to be the salt and light of the world.

Use these two lessons to teach students what that means and how to do it.

Usually, we post one lesson at a time. However, this time we created two lessons. One lesson on being SALT and another one is on being LIGHT. Each lesson comes with a fun opening game to setup the message. Feel free to use these lessons however you want. Do them as a 2-part series or combine them together in one message. The choice is yours.

Hope your students enjoy the lessons!

- Nick Diliberto, Ministry to Youth

YOUTH GROUP LESSON ON SALT

Written by Tiffany Hollums

Bible: Matthew 5:13

Bottom Line: We are the salt of Christ to the world.

SUPPLIES

Salty foods such as chips (of different and strange varieties), sardines, dill pickles, popcorn, salted caramel candy, salted peanuts, and just plain salt. Each item needs to be divided into 4 parts for the taste test.

Paper and pen-set of 4

Blindfolds (4)

A 'salty' prize for the winners of the game, preferably something funny such as a gold salt shaker!

Matthew 5: 13 from the Message printed out and put in a large salt shaker

Salt packets for each youth. (Or cheap salt shakers for each youth with a slip of paper inside for them to write their 'salty' challenge.)

OPENING GAME: SALTY

GAME SET-UP

Set up a long table or 4 different smaller tables with 4 chairs.

At each place, you will need a pad of paper, pen, and a blindfold.

Divide the group into 4 equal teams.

Allergy alert: Be sure to ask before you begin if there are any food allergies and the seriousness of the allergies. If someone has a serious peanut allergy, don't use peanuts in this challenge.

HOW TO PLAY THE GAME

For each round have all the salty items hidden

Once the contestants have eaten the item, put any of it remaining back in the box with the other items.

The contestants cannot take off their blindfolds until everyone has tried it.

Say: Today, we are going to test just how 'salty' you are.

At this table, we will be testing your 'saltiness' by having you taste different salty things, while blindfolded, and then you will write down on the pad of paper at each chair what you think the food was without saying anything.

Each person on the team will go at least once for this challenge, but you won't know what item you will get, so choose your order wisely!!!

Call forward one person from each team and have them put on the blindfold.

Tell the other people who are watching not to give away what you hold up!!

Choose one item to give to each person for Round 1 after they put on their blindfolds and show it to those watching.

Say: Ok, I am putting Round 1 in front of you and on the count of '3' you will eat it and then keep your blindfolds on until I tell you take them off.

After everyone has eaten the item, put the items away.

Tell the contestants to take off their blindfolds and to write on the pad of paper what they think the item was that they just ate.

Bring out the item and see which contestant guessed correctly and their teams get a point.

Continue for each 'salty' item and at the end of the game give a 'salty' prize to the team that wins!

TEACH

Say: Can someone tell me what the word 'salty' means?

Give them a chance to give you all the different current meanings and they will probably give you the correct usage... this will be a funny time for you to show just how 'old' you are!!

Does anyone know where this phrase originated?

Give a disclaimer that this definition is probably written by 'old people' but see if they agree:

"Salty" is a slang term meaning "upset" or "bitter" typically used as an insult in player-vs.-player (PvP) games to suggest that the opponent feels mad or frustrated due to pwnage.

According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the U.S. slang sense of salty meaning angry or irritated was first attested in 1938.

On April 24th, 2007, an entry on the term was submitted to Urban Dictionary.

The author describes it as having originated in Philadelphia, where it was defined as "looking stupid... because of something you did".

It is thought to have entered into widespread usage on the internet through fighting game and multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) communities.

But I would argue that Jesus actually came up with this phrase:

*Ask for a reader and hand them the large salt shaker with **Matthew 5:13** from the Message inside:*

“Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.”

Jesus is basically telling us to be ‘salty’ but he is redefining this to mean what?

(Give them a chance to share their understanding of what Jesus is meaning).

I’m going to divide you all back into your ‘salty’ teams and I here is your next challenge: create a virtual meme of what ‘saltiness according to Jesus’ could look like today.

Think of tough situations that each of you face every day and then think of what it would look like to add a different ‘flavor’ to that situation...a flavor that adds Jesus in a creative way.

I will give you 10 minutes to work on your meme!

After the teams seem to be done with their scenarios (or slight mayhem is breaking out) call everyone back together and call each group to share their ‘virtual meme’ of ‘saltiness according to Jesus’.

Share a personal story in which you faced a similar tough situation and how you did or didn’t add ‘saltiness’ from Christ to that situation.

Jesus had this amazing way of saying tough things in simple ways.

What are some of the things that salt is used for?

Give the group a chance to share, but add any of the following **Salt Facts** from <http://www.mortonsalt.com/article/salt-history/>

- The first written reference to salt is found in the Book of Job, recorded about 2,250 BC.
- There are 31 other references to salt in the Bible, the most familiar probably being the story of Lot’s wife who was turned into a pillar of salt when she disobeyed the angels and looked back at the wicked city of Sodom.
- From ancient times to the present, the importance of salt to humans and animals has been recognized. Thousands of years ago, animals created paths to salt licks, and men followed seeking game and salt. Their trails became roads and beside the roads; settlements grew. These settlements became cities and nations.

- The widespread superstition that spilling salt brings bad luck is believed to have originated with the overturned salt cellar in front of Judas Iscariot at the Last Supper, an incident immortalized in Leonardo Da Vinci's famous painting.

And from <http://www.maldonsalt.co.uk/About-Salt-Salt-interesting-facts.html>

Interesting Facts about Salt

- Roman soldiers were sometimes paid in salt - which is where the word 'salary' comes from. Difficult to spend it in restaurants today though.
- Every cell in the body contains salt - an adult contains about 250 grams, equivalent to a box of Maldon Salt.
- In old Japanese theaters, salt was sprinkled on to the stage before each performance to prevent evil spirits from casting a spell on the actors. Sprinkling salt around your home may have the same effect today.
- Salt is used to remove traces of water from aviation fuel after it is purified.
- Salt was used to preserve Egyptian mummies (and in the pies eaten by Egyptian daddies).
- Salt removes red wine stains (though probably not from your best cream carpet).
- Sodium is key in the operation of all signals within, as well as to and from, the brain.

And from <http://www.maldonsalt.co.uk/About-Salt-The-many-uses-of-Salt.html>

The Many Uses of Salt

Most people probably think of salt as simply a white granular food seasoning.

In fact, only 6% of all salt manufactured goes into food.

Apparently, we use salt in more than 14,000 different ways from the making of products as varied as plastic, paper, glass, polyester, rubber and fertilizers to household bleach, soaps, detergents and dyes.

Everyone uses salt, directly or indirectly.

Jesus is saying in what seems to be a very simple way, yet has just as many ways to live it out as the 14,000 different ways that salt is used.

He is basically saying: you must be salty.

And only you can know what that looks like for you: maybe you need to step up how you stand up for what you know to be right.

Maybe it means that the words you speak need to be filled with things that you know Jesus would want you to say.

And it doesn't have to be 'preachy' but just think about what it would sound like to speak words of love, kindness, mercy, grace, and forgiveness into the hurt and rudeness of this world.

Jesus is saying: Be salty. But by HIS definition of the word.

Before you leave, each of you are going to get a salt packet (*or salt shaker*) and here is your challenge: Write how you will be 'salty' for Christ and this world and put it somewhere where you can see it to remind yourself to be salty.

The Jesus kind of salty.

Close in prayer.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What are your favorite salty foods?
- Which facts or uses of salt surprised you?
- What other situations can you think of in which it would be challenging to be Jesus salty?
- How are you feeling challenged to be salty in your everyday life?

Close in prayer.

End lesson.

YOUTH GROUP LESSON ON BEING LIGHT

Bible: Matthew 5:14-16

Bottom Line: We are the Light of Christ in a dark world.

SUPPLIES

5 Glow-in-the-dark necklaces per youth

Current newspapers (enough copies for the group to be able to read quietly)

Flashlights for each youth which they will take with them at the end of the lesson

Tape

OPENING GAME: GLOW TAG

Give each teen 5 glow-in-the-dark necklaces to wear for the game.

This game is a fancy game of hide and seek...the youth will hide with their glow necklaces **AROUND THEIR NECKS** in plain sight - be sure to say this because some youth will be sneaky and try to hide the necklaces.

When they are spotted by 'it,' they have to go to 'it' and give them one of their necklaces.

Once a person loses all of their necklaces, they are 'it'.

The person who used to be 'it' takes 5 necklaces and leaves the rest with the new 'it'.

This game can continue as long as the group wants.

TEACH

Say: Were any of you afraid of the dark when you were a little kid?

Have you ever stopped to ask - why are kids afraid of the dark?

Give the youth a chance to answer and if you were afraid of the dark, share your thoughts also.

The world can be a scary place to a little kid.

The fear of the unknown is scary...but sometimes the fear of what is known can be just as scary.

There are children around the world who have real reasons to be afraid - reasons that are much more real and scary than a make-believe creature under their bed.

There are probably people in this room who know exactly what I am talking about too.

Sometimes the world can seem like a dark place.

And the hurt and the pain and the darkness are real.

I'm going to give each of you a flashlight and then we are going to turn off the lights. Not yet, though!

Around the room are newspapers and these pages are examples of just how dark and full of hurt our world is right now.

Take your flashlights and I'm going to give you 10-15 minutes to take your time and read the papers.

Find stories in these papers that stick with you.

Take your time and really read the stories and stay silent to give everyone a chance to read, think, and choose the stories that stick to you.

Then, tear out that page and tape it to the wall around us.

Once you've done this, keep on reading the papers and taping up articles.

As you read, you will have to use your flashlight to see because in a minute we will turn out the lights.

Give the groups 10-15 minutes to walk around and read from different newspapers.

As some youth get done more quickly, prompt them to go and find other stories or help others to tape their stories up around the room.

As more and more get done, prompt them to walk around the room using their flashlights to read the stories on the wall around the room, silently.

Read Matthew 5:14-16 from the Message.

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Jesus told his disciples to shine and his words are true for us: Shine so others see the light and see God.

Look around this room.

It might look like we are surrounded in darkness, but think about the challenge that Jesus is giving to us.

He agrees that the world is dark with pain and hurt and loneliness and _____ (let the youth fill in the words), but then here is the amazing thing that Jesus is Sharing with us: we are the light of the world.

We shine the light of Jesus or we SHOULD be shining the light and the love of Jesus in the middle of this pain.

Can we 'fix' each and every one of these situations? No.

But what we can do is to shine the light and the love of Jesus through our actions.

Start where we are and shine.

Think about this - Where is there darkness around you?

Maybe at school or in your neighborhood or at home even.

What would it look like to shine in those situations?

Give the youth a few moments to answer on ways they could shine the light of Christ.

It doesn't have to be complicated or preachy to shine the light of Jesus.

Share an example of someone who you have seen shine the light of Christ in simple ways that they live.

Shine the light that Christ puts inside of you.

When we really let the light of Christ shine into our own lives, it leaks out without us really trying sometimes.

Shining becomes a part of who you are and you shine.

As we get ready to go to small groups, I want you to take a few moments to walk around this room once again using your flashlight to reread the stories and pray as you read.

Even this simple act is a way to shine the light of Christ.

Choose one of the stories to take with you to commit to pray.

Pray that the light of Christ would shine in these places.

Take your flashlight with you and put it somewhere to remind you to shine the light of Christ in your own life.

As Jesus said, "you are the light of the world."

Don't keep that light hidden.

Shine.

Close in prayer.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Give each youth a chance to share the story that they chose to take with them and why.
- Brainstorm about ways that others or even you could shine the light of Christ in these situations.
- Where are the situations in your life where shining the light of Jesus seems difficult? Why?
- What are some practical ways that you could shine the light of Christ in your life?