

# LESSON 8 God Sent You to Care for the World

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In the region of Africa where we lived many years ago, salt was a vital commodity and was sufficient to cancel all debts. This custom came from a time when salt was hard to find. Today, salt remains an important part of life. It is used to preserve and flavor foods, clean wounds, heal sore throats, and aid in various other ways.

Jesus said, “Salt is good” (Luke 14:34) and that those who believed in Him were “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). Therefore, He warned His disciples against losing their saltiness.

What does this illustration mean? Jesus was saying that His people had to be different. Just as people recognize salt by its taste, so everyone should know Christians by their special way of living and by their positive influence on society.

The world needs our saltiness, our light, and our message. We must be, do, and say all that God commands. Our purpose in life is to represent the grace and justice of God to the world, so that the world will know and be saved.

## ***The Plan***

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- A. Salt Preserves: Showing the Love of God
- B. Salt Purifies: Showing the Righteousness of God
- C. Salt Flavors: Spreading the Message of God

## ***The Goals***

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- 1. Demonstrate specific ways to show the love of God to your neighbors.
- 2. Identify ways you can reflect God's righteousness in your community.
- 3. Explain how God wants to use you to tell others about Him.

## **A. SALT PRESERVES: SHOWING THE LOVE OF GOD**

**Goal 1.** Demonstrate specific ways to show the love of God to your neighbors.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. (1 John 4:7–8)

The first evidence of being God's child is having love. Real Christian love, which is not just talk but action (1 John 3:18), has great impact. Jesus knew this when He commanded His disciples to love one another, just as He loved them: "If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:35).

We know that love is necessary to preserve life, yet our world is deprived of real love. Often, when people see genuine concern, they are surprised. One church leader observed that if Christians today loved as the Bible commands, people would be

crowding around the doors of our churches. A Christian writer has stated that the church should be a life-saving station, which provides the love that the world needs. Indeed, Jesus implied that other people would be convinced by the love they saw between Christians who were united in love. He prayed to the Father that all believers be one, just as He and His Father are one. Jesus prayed, “May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

The love that God has put in our hearts is not just for other Christians. God loves the entire world, and we are called to love the people of the world, too. Our love is salt for them. Paul encourages believers who were known for their brotherly love:



May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. (1 Thessalonians 3:12)

The great commandments of God are for us to love God and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus teaches that the persons we are to love may be anyone we meet and that our love must be in deed.

So how can we express love to our neighbors? We need to care and share. We do not isolate ourselves, but rather relate honestly and graciously as witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, we comfort our neighbors in their distress, not criticize or abandon them. The apostle Paul writes,

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

Because we are forgiven sinners, we should not set ourselves apart from others for reasons of prejudice or self-righteousness. Jesus was called the friend of sinners. On visiting Zacchaeus, He did not condemn him, but soon Zacchaeus was a changed man—because Jesus made himself available to him. John writes,

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17)

## ***Application***

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- 1** Write 1 Thessalonians 3:12 in your notebook and memorize it. Make this a daily prayer for yourself.
- 2** After praying the prayer above, look in your community. Does someone need friendship, food, clothes, or some other kind of help? Make a list of these people and see what you can do to be the salt in their situation.



## **B. SALT PURIFIES: SHOWING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**

**Goal 2.** Identify ways you can reflect God's righteousness in your community.

The people of the world do not understand the righteousness of God. Therefore, the children of God are in the world to continue the work of Jesus and to make God's goodness known. Thus, we bring a purifying influence into our societies.

We saw earlier that most people's attitudes and actions result from motives of selfishness, pride, laziness, greed, or pleasure. Those were our motives too, before Christ saved us. Now we are to have better motives and more holy actions. This will mean changing our sinful behaviors. Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus,

He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:28–29)

We must demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Our conduct should be recognizably different from that of other people (1 Peter 2:12). Moreover we should try to see that honesty, hard work, and justice prevail in our community. When Jesus saw that evil merchants were robbing the worshippers in the temple, he was angry and drove them out (Matthew 21:12–13). Jesus was concerned with what was fair and right; He hated hypocrisy and deceit. For this reason, He opposed the unfairness of the Pharisees. He called these apparently religious men “whitewashed tombs, . . . full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (Matthew 23:27–28).

God acts against cheaters and liars. He did not allow the deception of Ananias and Sapphira to go unpunished (Acts 5:1–11). They lied about how much of their money they were giving to God. But the Holy Spirit told Peter, and God struck them dead. Their lie was a mockery of His power and a dishonor to the church.

God is not slow to judge the enemies of Christ through the words of His servants. Think of Elymas the magician, who opposed Paul and Barnabas (see Acts 13:6–12). Elymas tried to stop the gospel with all kinds of evil, but God punished him with blindness.

While God does not always act directly as He did in those examples, He expects us to do what we can to correct wrong actions. In Scripture, God often corrected His people for their failure to maintain the rights of the poor in their community. Isaiah writes, “Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1:17).

Again and again God spoke to His people about the same social problems which trouble all people. He gave clear instructions:

“These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD.  
(Zechariah 8:16–17)

Christians must be examples of goodness. As you will remember from Lesson 2, we are to be holy as the Father is holy. So, we work steadfastly at bringing about justice in our communities. To learn more about how you can do this, inquire about the course *The Christian in His Community*.

## ***Application***

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- 3** Circle the letter before each statement below that shows Christian action.
- a)** Told a shopkeeper he had given you too much change and returned it.
  - b)** Told your boss that you were late to work and therefore should not receive so much pay.
  - c)** Said that you were not the one who made a mistake when you did.
  - d)** Suggested to your neighbors that you all collect food and clothing to help a poor widow and then kept it.
  - e)** Found good things to say about a person nobody likes.

- 4 List some ways you can show your community that you care for them.

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## C. SALT FLAVORS: SPREADING THE MESSAGE OF GOD

**Goal 3.** Explain how God wants to use you to tell others about Him.

It is amazing to think that God needs us. Yet that is His plan. He has chosen people to tell the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. We who have become the children of God are the salt of the earth. Remember that salt not only preserves and purifies, but it also flavors. God's purpose is that His salt—His children—should flavor the whole earth.

The apostle Paul says a similar thing about fragrance. Just as with salt, a little goes a long way. So when fragrance is released, it fills the room or space with sweet smell. Paul writes,

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. (2 Corinthians 2:14–15)

There are many lessons to be learned from this passage. Notice first that it is God's plan to reach the world, not ours. As servants of God, we are commanded to tell others about Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Remember what Jesus said before He returned to heaven:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20)

The order to go and make disciples—to teach them about Christ and about Christian ethics—is followed by a wonderful promise: “I am with you always.” This underlines the idea that we are not alone; we do not have to rely on our own power or wisdom. We have our faithful friend, the Holy Spirit, to help us. Acts 1:8 reminds us,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”



As we are continually filled with the Spirit, we become sensitive to God’s leading. He uses us to speak to the people we meet. He gives us wisdom to know how best to speak to them, according to their understanding and need. We do not have to be nervous or anxious, for it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince people that they need Jesus as Savior (John 16:8–11).

Our responsibility simply is to be used by God as witnesses. A witness is a person who knows something by personal experience and tells about it. Jesus’ disciples were witnesses to the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 3:15). Everywhere they went, they told people that they had seen Jesus alive again. Then they explained what Jesus’ resurrection meant: He was indeed the Son of God; He had died for humanity’s sins;

if people believed in Jesus, their sins would be forgiven and they would become children of God.

Your just and loving actions are a witness to the world. But they are a silent witness. Salt is good for preserving and purifying, but if it has no taste, it is useless. Even our good lives are useless to God if people do not understand how we have become good. We have to tell people the message of the Gospel.

Peter and John healed a lame man at the gate of the temple (Acts 3). When the people saw what happened they were amazed. But they were not ignorant long about how the miracle had happened. Peter quickly explained that it was the power of Jesus and faith in His Name that made the man well (Acts 3:16). Peter pointed others to Jesus and urges us to do the same.

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.  
Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (1 Peter 3:15–16)

Notice that our witness must be wise, gentle, respectful, and without false superiority. If you have not already studied the course, *Personal Evangelism*, you should do so. It contains valuable lessons that will help you become an effective witness for Jesus Christ.

Finally, when you proclaim the gospel by your witness, there will be results. Paul tells us that our fragrance will be spread “among those who are being saved and those who are perishing” (2 Corinthians 2:15). This is to reassure you that you are not responsible for making people Christians. You cannot force them into God’s kingdom. You can only represent God as His ambassador. You can show and persuade. But it

is each individual's choice to accept or reject the message of reconciliation.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:20–21)

Praise God! You are already His friend. You are sharing His righteousness and being used by God to spread His gospel. Your new life in Christ is being practiced in your attitudes and actions.

## ***Application***

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**5** Circle the letter before each TRUE statement which describes a good witness.

- a)** I do not have to tell people about Jesus; they can just see I am a Christian by my actions.
- b)** I need to have the Holy Spirit's help when witnessing.
- c)** I should keep on talking to a person about Jesus until he or she finally gives up.
- d)** I can tell people what Jesus has done for me and for other Christians I know.
- e)** Words about Jesus' life and the way I live as a Christian should not conflict.

**6** Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to someone to whom you can witness. Ask His guidance in how you can best share your Savior. Pray for this person for several days before talking to him or her. When the person accepts Jesus as Savior, encourage him or her to learn more by reading the Bible and by taking a course such as Your New Life.



## Check Your Answers

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- 3** Phrases **a)**, **b)**, and **c)** are Christian actions.
- 1** Your answer
- 4** Your answer may be different but some ways would be:
- Be a friend to your neighbor
  - Help the needy whenever you can
  - Show them respect and love
- 2** Your answer
- 5** Statements **b)**, **d)**, and **e)** are true.

## CONGRATULATIONS

You have finished this course. We hope that it has been a great help to you! Remember to complete the second Unit Evaluation and return the answer sheet to your instructor.