

The **ENTRUSTED Leader's Workbook**
***“Barnabas”* Edition**

Seven Core Values that Impact Every Leader-to-Follower Relationship:
HEART-MISSION-APPROACH-STABILITY-LIFESTYLE-FORTITUDE-WORLDVIEW

Lesson Sixteen: Being Salt and Light in the Marketplace

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Lesson Sixteen: Being Salt and Light in the Marketplace

CORE VALUE: A LIFESTYLE that is Beyond Reproach and publicly demonstrates faith, hope, and love in the marketplace.

BIBLE VERSE(S): Matthew 5:13-16

ONE SIMPLE TRUTH: God expects a leader to exert a positive moral influence.

APPLICATION: Be courageous in the face of moral decay and darkness.

Introduction:

Leaders influence others. Leaders exert this influence in the context of the public's eye. People watch leaders like a hawk to determine the authenticity of his or her moral influence. Even those unaffected by a leader will watch and pronounce judgment on his or her actions and decisions. Influence and visibility go hand-in-hand with leadership. Influence and visibility work in tandem to provide the leader an opportunity to impact the world in which he or she leads.

God endorses the noble activity of leading others. God has ordered the affairs of men whereby one guides the activities of another. God intends for a leader to influence his or her followers directly and society at large indirectly. God rises up leaders in every arena of human endeavor to display his truth and glory. God has raised you up in the marketplace to publicly influence those you lead and those who watch you lead.

God desires to use each follower of Jesus Christ as a leader. God looks for leaders willing to represent his interests in all walks of life. God's design for human society contemplates the leadership of those who faithfully follow his One and Only Son – Jesus Christ. Throughout human history, God has raised up earthly leaders for all to see in

order to demonstrate his truth and presence in the world. One should not think that God only raises up leaders for the Church. God looks for leaders who will faithfully serve him in every arena of life such as: the family, the marketplace, government, and education. God desires you to influence others and visibly represent his interests everywhere you lead.

The leader-to-follower relationship defines the essence of leadership. Within the context of this relationship, God intends for a leader to privately and publicly exert influence that promotes the greater good of mankind. Leaders should illuminate God's presence in a manner that attracts others. Leaders should flavor God's truth in a manner tasteful to others. Mankind resides in a dark and decaying world. Only God's love extended through human relationships, such as a leader to a follower, can penetrate and dissipate this darkness and stave off the moral decay of this world.

God expects leaders who claim to follow Jesus to demonstrate professional excellence. Whatever profession you choose, you should strive to be the best you can be. The public display of exceptional skill and knowledge in a given field of human endeavor brings glory to God. Followers respect and ascribe credibility to the leader who they believe to be outstanding at what he or she does. Such professional excellence sets the stage for a leader to influence others. Typically, influence gained by excellence does not extend beyond one's temporal professional arena.

Influence, however, does not have to end with the temporal. God calls leaders who follow his Son to a grander purpose than professional excellence. Temporal professional excellence opens the door for a leader to exert an influence on others that is eternally significant. Every marketplace relationship stands as an opportunity to publicly

display God’s love and grace in a dark world. The leader-to-follower relationship can serve as a conduit to spread God’s truth that counteracts the evils that so readily permeate the inhabitants of earth. Recognition that God desires and intends to use you as a leader in this regard brings real meaning to your role as a marketplace leader. God intends you to be salt and light in the marketplace as you lead others. Read Matthew 5:13-16 and answer the following questions.

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city 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 men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:13-16 NIV)

Questions of the Biblical Text¹ (Matthew 5:13-16)

Name two common uses for salt. Explain how these uses of salt might metaphorically apply to your role as a leader.

What does it mean to you that followers of Jesus are to salt “the earth”?

¹ Unless otherwise noted the questions listed in *The ENTRUSTED Leader’s Workbook* are based on: *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, c1984)

What do you think Jesus meant by saying that salt which has lost its saltiness is worthless and should be thrown out?

What does light do? Explain how being a light might metaphorically apply to your role as a leader.

What does it mean that followers of Jesus are to be light to “the world”?

In your own words, relate the visibility of a city on a hill to the visibility of a leader?

In your own words, relate a lamp under a bowl in a room to a leader who keeps his or her faith concealed from his or her followers.

What is the source and nature of the light Jesus wants his followers to shine before men?

What happens when followers of Jesus shine their light before men?

Commentary

Salt not only acts as a seasoning agent which adds flavor to food, but also acts as a preservative that inhibits the decay of food. Commentators debate which of these uses Jesus might have had in mind when he instructed his follows to be the salt of the earth. When I consider the role of a leader, I think both metaphorically apply.

Salt adds flavor to food making bland food taste better. Salt increases the appeal of food and leaves people hungry and thirsty for more. Leaders can have a similar effect on their followers. The leader-to-follower relationship represents a ripe opportunity for whetting others appetite for the things of God. How a leader conducts himself or herself professionally can make a follower hungry and thirsty to experience God's love first hand. Professionally skilled leaders who serve others with character and compassion act as a seasoning agent that adds a Godly flavor to the world within which they lead.

Salt slows the spread of decay and preserves a food's freshness. Leaders can have a similar effect on the culture of one's organization. The leader-to-follower relationship represents an ideal environment for the spreading of God's truth and goodness to others. How a leader acts will either inhibit or encourage moral decay. Professionally skilled

leaders who serve others with character and compassion act as a preserving agent that inhibits the spread of evil and corruption.

Followers of Jesus Christ need to act as salt though out “the earth.” The Greek term for earth is *ge*. The root of this word refers to the soil, ground, or land of the planet earth. *Ge* can also, however, refer to the people or inhabitants of the planet earth. In Matthew 5:13, Jesus is referring to the people. Followers of Jesus are to be salt among the all the inhabitants of the planet earth. Consider Sawnsion’s definition of *ge*: “**1. earth**, the surface of the whole earth ...**2. land**, in contrast to sea ... **5. people**, inhabitants of the earth, mankind (Mt 5:13)”²

Followers of Jesus are to act as salt among the peoples who inhabit the earth. Salt tastes best when mixed evenly into a food item. Salt only preserves what it comes into contact with; consequently, salt must spread over the entire surface of a food to inhibit decay. Jesus desires his followers to spread out and mix with the masses of humanity in order to inhibit moral decay and promote a thirst and hunger for God’s grace and truth. Leaders who follow Jesus have ample opportunity to provide both benefits of salt to those they lead.

Sadly, many leaders who claim to follow Jesus fail to preserve or flavor the environment in which they lead. Moral corruption abounds unchallenged. No behavior exists that leaves a follower hungry or thirsty to learn of one’s faith in God. These leaders have lost their saltiness and make no contribution to God’s eternal purpose of spreading his presence among the peoples of the earth. Salt is not a neutral agent; salt either flavors

²James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)*, electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), DBLG 1178, #7.

and preserves or it doesn't. God does not entrust leadership to followers of Jesus for them to be neutral. It is not good enough for a leader to mix among followers with no regard for standing against moral decay or attracting them to God's grace and mercy.

Light dissipates darkness and makes the world more clearly visible. Light illuminates so people can see more clearly. Light can guide one's path in the night. A beacon of light far in the distance can provide direction for someone lost in the wilderness. The light of distant stars makes humans wonder what lies beyond the planet earth.

Jesus said of himself: "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5 NIV) Jesus later explained the significance of his light: "Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (John 12:44-46 NIV) The light of the Father shines through Jesus revealing God's presence. This light drove away the spiritual darkness that keeps mankind blinded to God's love and truth.

Jesus instructed his followers to function as lights. Metaphorically, speaking leaders who claim to follow Jesus should function as a beacon of God's light to those they lead. Just as a lamp rests on a stand, so also leaders operate on a highly visible platform. This visibility affords a leader an opportunity to shine brightly for God. Followers close and afar can receive the benefit of spiritual enlightenment that helps them see God more clearly. As light from a star, seeing God's light shine through you as a leader draws attention to what might lie beyond the light. Others should see a Christ follower's light and be drawn to the source, which is God's presence within them.

Jesus instructed his followers to be light to the world. The Greek word for world is *kosmos*. The basic idea of this term relates to an orderly arrangement of something, such as: an orderly government, the arrangement of the stars, or the order of the universe just to name a few examples. The word also refers to the people who inhabit the earth. Consider Strong's definitions of *kosmos* that explain both of these uses.

“**1** an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order, government. **2** ornament, decoration, adornment, i.e. the arrangement of the stars, ‘the heavenly hosts’, as the ornament of the heavens. 1 Pet. 3:3. **3** the world, the universe. **4** the circle of the earth, the earth. **5** the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human race. **6** the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ. **7** world affairs, the aggregate of things earthly.”³

I believe Jesus had the inhabitants of the world in mind as the target of his follower's light. Jesus wants the light of God to shine upon the ungodly masses who live alienated and hostile to God. The ruler of this world holds men in darkness and encourages their rebellion. As followers of Jesus, we have the opportunity to let our light dissipate this darkness and make God's presence more visible.

God's enemy wants Jesus' followers to believe that they should conceal their light. Jesus warned against this suggestion. Just as it makes no sense to place a lamp under a basket, so also it makes no sense for a follower of Jesus to hide the light of God's presence from the world. For a leader who claims to follow Jesus, the leader-to-follower relationship comes into view. As a leader, God desires you to shine spiritual light on those who follow you. When a follower of Jesus faithfully illuminates the world around him or her with God's light our Father in heaven receives praise.

³James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order.*, electronic ed. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship., 1996), G2889.

Application

As a follower of Jesus Christ who leads in the marketplace, Jesus has called you to be salt and light to those you lead. So how do Christ followers do this? The first step is to recognize that you are on public display. Followers near and far are watching you. Those you lead watch how you treat others, how you make decisions, how you live your personal life. You are in the public eye and on a platform of leadership entrusted to you by God.

Secondly, you must keep in mind that you cannot be salt or light to people whom you never have contact. God desires a leader to mix with the people of this world without losing one's saltiness or allowing the world to dim his or her light. God desires you to build authentic relationships with your followers and to look for opportunities to bring the light of God's love to their lives. Too many Christians either avoid contact with non-Christians altogether, or they conceal their faith in a manner that provides no salt or light.

Thirdly, when you encounter other people of the world, remember to carry God's salt and light with you. The evils of this world are thwarted when we spread the truth of God's word. Boldly living according to and proclaiming God's word preserves society and stops moral decay. In the same way, a leader must display the light of God's love in one's own life in such a way that the illumination attracts others to God. A Christian's life does not provide salt and light, God's word and love shining through them does.

Conclusion

God expects a leader to display a positive moral influence for all to see. Leaders are visible and influential in regard to others. The relationship a leader has with his or her followers provides a ready-made opportunity to spread God's word and love to others.

The leader who provides the salt of God's truth and word to his or her followers acts to preserve moral goodness and stop the spread of moral decay. The leader who shines the light of God's love to his or her followers draws attention to God's presence and dissipates the darkness of this world. Jesus wants his followers who lead in the marketplace to courageously stand up to moral decay and darkness so all who watch them lead know and praise God the Father.