

LESSON 7 Shining in Your Community

In the Panama Canal Museum is an old signal light. It was made in France in the 1800s and taken to Panama when the French were trying to build an overland canal. They were unable to continue the construction of the canal because of sickness and lack of money. However, the old light stayed on. It served for many years as a signal for ships at sea.

Inside the light is a place for a small kerosene lamp. Surrounding the lamp are rows of cut glass in long narrow strips which serve as reflectors. There are perhaps 800 reflectors around the lamp. They have no light in themselves, but they reflect and send out the light of the lamp. And so, the tiny light from the kerosene lamp is multiplied many hundreds of times to make a brilliant, shining light. For many years, ships and boats were guided to shore by this faraway light.

In the same way, we reflect the light of Jesus Christ to the world. The Bible compares a Christian to both light and salt. In this lesson you will see how you can be light and salt to your community. Having your mind influenced by Christ will help you to reflect His love to the world.

The Plan

- A. A Light to Your Community
- B. Salt in Your Community
- C. A Renewed Mind

The Goals

1. Describe ways a Christian can reflect the light of Jesus.
2. State how a Christian can be like salt in his or her community.
3. Identify attitudes of a renewed mind.

A. A LIGHT TO YOUR COMMUNITY

Goal 1. Describe ways a Christian can reflect the light of Jesus.

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 9:5). He also said, “You are the light of the world . . . let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16). We have no light in ourselves, but we reflect the light of Jesus, much as the reflectors in the old signal light in Panama reflected light from the lamp.

One of the purposes of light is to shine so that people can move about safely. The psalmist writes, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path” (Psalm 119:105). People may not read God’s Word, but they observe our lives. As we study the Word and walk in its light, others will be better able to see the right path. We will be serving as reflectors of Christ’s light and helping others find the way to Christ.

Another purpose of light is to warn of danger. Lighthouses are built to warn ships of rocks beneath the water, or of rocky coasts. Christians serve as lights to warn of the dangers of sin. Not only does God’s Word help us to avoid sin, but also it is

reflected from our lives to warn others. Often it is necessary for us to give a warning against sin.

Light also makes it possible for people to see things as they really are. Hebrews 4:12–13 says,

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

When our hearts are open to the Word, it causes us to see ourselves as God sees us. In turn, when people who are not Christians look at our lives, it should cause them to recognize their sin and their need for the transforming power of Jesus. Paul writes that believers should live as “blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe” (Philippians 2:15–16).

Application

1 Name three purposes of light given in this lesson.

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2 Apply each of these purposes to our responsibility as Christians.

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B. SALT IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Goal 2. State how a Christian can be like salt in his or her community.

Jesus said, “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” (Matthew 5:13). One function or purpose of salt is to purify. When salt is used to purify, it destroys those things that do not belong.

Purity is a virtue or quality that Christians are to show to their community. To be pure is to live holy. By being pure ourselves, we can influence our community towards purity. While the spirit of the world is to diminish honesty and moral goodness, the Christian is commissioned by God to uphold standards of purity in speech, behavior, and thought. Sin is like an infection, and we are to act as healing agents to destroy it and keep it from spreading. When we speak out against sin, we serve as salt in our community.

Salt is also used to preserve. For example, we use it to preserve fish and meat. I was born on the island of Newfoundland, where a common meal is a “salt meat dinner.” This name is used because salt was used to preserve the beef. Newfoundland is also a great fishing country. I remember visiting the fishermen’s docks where they have tons of fish packed in salt. After much time the salt preserves the fish, which is later packed to be sold.

In both of these cases, the salt preserves the meat so it can be eaten later. The meat keeps its natural qualities; it does not lose its flavor. Similarly, the Christian is to be the salt of the earth—a preserving agent in the world. Christians must influence others positively.

The most common quality of salt is its ability to flavor. It has flavor in itself, but salt’s best use is to bring out the flavor of food. Christianity is to life what salt is to food. It flavors life.

Take Christianity and its influence out of life and you have a very dull life with no meaning or purpose.

We Christians should be pure ourselves and influence others to be pure. We should do all in our power to preserve that which is right and good. Our own lives should show others that Christianity gives purpose to life. Then we are serving as salt, as Jesus said we would.

Application

3 Fill in the blanks.

a) In a sinful world, the Christian must be

b) A pure Christian is like
because he or she helps to purify the community.

4 Name three functions of salt.

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5 Apply each of these functions to our responsibility as Christians.

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C. A RENEWED MIND

Goal 3. Identify attitudes of a renewed mind.

We have just learned that we have no light of our own—we simply reflect Christ’s light. Neither do we have power to preserve, purify, or flavor our world. The power comes from God, who gives us wisdom to use His power for the good of others.

It is the same with your mind. You cannot really understand how it works—only God can understand it. Therefore, the more your mind or thoughts are yielded to God, the more He can influence your mind. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

A transformation or complete change takes place in us when we find the Lord. Everything takes on new life. We see things differently; we think differently; and our mind is renewed. God is now in control of our thoughts and ideas. We need to get into the habit of allowing God to influence us through our minds. Allow God to impress your mind with His thoughts. As you pray, you will become sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. He will give you wisdom in your relationships with others. As you follow His leading, your mind will be transformed and renewed, and you will be salt and light to your community.

In 1 Corinthians 2:16, the apostle Paul says, “We have the mind of Christ.” He also says in Philippians 2:5, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Then he goes on to tell about the attitude Christ had. Read Philippians 2:5–11, then study the chart below until you understand the attitudes of Christ and God’s response to those attitudes.

ACTION OF JESUS	HIS STATE OF MIND	GOD’S RESPONSE
He gave up all He had (v. 7).	Submissive	God raised Him to the highest place (v. 9).
He took the nature of a servant (v. 7).	Humble	God gave Him the name greater than any other name (v. 9).
He walked the path of obedience (v. 8).	Obedient	God gave Him a place of honor (vv. 10–11).

Do you have the kind of mind Christ had? Are you submissive, humble, and obedient? Ask the Lord to help you have a renewed mind—the mind of Christ. Having His mind will help you relate His love and concern to your community.

Application

6 Write an example of how you can be

a) submissive.

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b) humble.

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c) obedient.

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7 How does a renewed mind make us more effective?

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Check Your Answers

- 5** A Christian should be a healing agent to those around him or her. He or she should preserve that which is right, and should show how Christ gives meaning to life.
- 1** To help us see our path; to warn of danger; to help us see things as they really are
- 6** Your answer. Were you able to think of examples for all three?
- 2** We reflect Christ's light to help others find the way to Him, to warn them of the dangers of sin, and to help them see sin as it really is.
- 3** a) pure
b) salt
- 7** When my mind is renewed, I have the attitudes of Christ, and I can influence others to follow Him.
- 4** To purify, preserve, and flavor