



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

MAKING A LASTING IMPACT

KEY PASSAGE: Matthew 5:13-16 | SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES: John 3:19; 9:5 | Romans 12:2 | 2 Corinthians 6:17
1 Timothy 2:3-4 | 1 John 1:5

► SUMMARY

We all impact others whether we're aware of it or not.

The degree varies according to each individual's sphere of influence and opportunities, but all of us touch other people's lives for good or bad. Only Christians, though, can have a spiritual impact for Christ because we alone are indwelt by His Spirit.

► SERMON POINTS

Each believer is a unique person created by God for His purposes, and it's His will that we live to impact other people for their spiritual good. It begins with those close to us and extends outward as far as the Lord allows.

The power of our impact is determined by the integrity of our lives. To help us understand this, Jesus used two common terms—salt and light—to emphasize the importance of character and lifestyle for the effectiveness of our witness for Him.

“You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13).

Salt is different from the substance it touches, and the same is true for believers. We're different and separate from the world we impact (2 Cor. 6:17). In a society characterized by sin, our holy and purified lives stand in stark contrast. We're warned in Romans 12:2 not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

We relate to the world as salt does with the substance it touches.

- **Salt flavors.** It has the power to turn what is tasteless into something enjoyable. In the same way, we bring flavor to a world filled with people whose lives are empty and void because they don't know Jesus.
- **Salt preserves.** In Roman times, salt was a very valuable commodity because it was the only means of preserving food. Christians have a similar preserving influence on a corrupt world. Our witness can help turn an unbeliever to Christ and preserve them from the decay of sinful choices.
- **Salt penetrates.** The Holy Spirit uses our godly example and witness to drive the truth into the heart in such a way that it permeates the entire person.
- **Salt creates thirst.** Believers are living examples of spiritual transformation. The joy, peace, and contentment that Christ gives us are attractive to thirsty souls whom the Spirit is drawing to the Savior.
- **Salt is quiet.** Sometimes God draws people to Christ through the quiet means of observation. As they see our godly behavior, gracious responses, and patient endurance, their hearts may be opened to the gospel.
- **Salt heals.** As salt gives relief to a sore throat, so we are called to offer healing to a broken world. Compassion, kindness, and a listening ear let hurting people experience Christ's love through us.

Jesus' Warning

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by people” (Matt. 5:13).

In those days, salt was collected from evaporated sea water. It was scraped up from the ground along with impurities. If there were too many impurities, the salt became tasteless and useless. Sin has the same corrupting influence on our ability to impact those around us for Christ. When a believer tolerates sin, he becomes useless to the Lord. Those who become like the world have nothing different to offer them.

“You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

According to 1 John 1:5, “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” Jesus also says, “I am the Light of the world” (John 9:5). Yet now He declares to those who have trusted Him as Savior, “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14). Then He adds, “Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (v. 16). Our light isn’t our own, but rather a reflection of Christ within us. God uses that light to draw people to Himself, not to us, so that He alone receives the glory.

We impact the people around us just as light does darkness.

- **Light is clear and pure.** Our lives should be characterized by purity and clarity. The person we are in public ought to be the same person we are in private.
- **Light reveals what’s hidden in the darkness.** When we’re characterized by godliness, those who are unrighteous see the difference between their lives and ours. Sometimes they feel guilty because they know they’re not living as they should. Others may ask us why our lives are so different, and that opens the door for us to share the gospel with them.
- **Light drives darkness away.** When people are uncomfortable around us, it might be because they’re feeling the conviction of the Holy Spirit. This could lead to antagonism and even persecution. John 3:19 says, “The Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were

evil.” But sometimes the Lord uses the light in us to drive them from darkness to salvation.

- **Light guides.** God uses us like a lamp to guide the unbelieving onto the path of truth.
- **Light warns.** Without light we can’t see the obstacles before us, and this is spiritually true for the lost. We can warn them that they’re in danger and need the Savior.
- **Light warms.** We should never be cold and unfeeling toward those trapped in darkness. They need to know we care, so they can see Christ’s love flowing through us.

While Jesus was in the world, He was the Light of the world (John 9:5), but now He’s at the Father’s right hand in heaven, and He’s left His church here to be the light to the world. As the church proclaims the Word of God, it’s a bright beacon showing people the way to salvation.

Another Warning

Just as salt is made useless by impurities, so light becomes ineffective if it doesn’t shine brightly. Sin in our lives is like soot covering the globe of our lantern or like a short wick that barely flickers. We need to be clear, strong lights so we can impact the lost world with the knowledge of Christ.

► RESPONSE

- If you were the only Christian someone knew, would they see Christ’s light in you and want to know Jesus?
- What kinds of impurities are keeping you from being the salt and light of the world? How have you been distracted by the world’s values and pursuits? What sins are you tolerating in your life?
- Do the people at work or in the neighborhood know you’re a believer? How is your life different from those around you?

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