



## Session 1

# The Salt of the Earth

### WARM-UP

1. If this is a new group, share your name, how you found out about this group, then...
2. What snack food do you find nearly irresistible and what makes it irresistible to you?

### STUDY

1. Read Luke 15:1-10. What was the context? What moved Jesus to tell these stories?
2. What or who did the lost sheep and coin represent? Who or what did the shepherd and woman represent? What do these stories suggest about the value these lost items had to the owner?
3. What point was Jesus making to his audience through these parables?
4. Applying these parables to our world today, who would the Pharisees represent? Who would the lost items represent? How much does Jesus value them? Why does he value them? What point does Jesus want to get across to you?
5. The point Jesus wants to make is so important to him that he drives it home by telling three stories in rapid fire succession. Why is this so important to Jesus? In what ways do you think Jesus wants us to respond?
6. Now that you have discovered the point Jesus was making, how does it make you feel? On a gut-level, how are you reacting to what Jesus is saying to you?



## A Brief History of Salt

Believe it or not, the reason some civilizations flourished in very ancient times is because of salt. Salt allowed people to preserve food, freeing them from dependence on the seasonal availability of food and the unpredictability of the weather, and allowing them to travel long distances.

Because salt was not easy to obtain, it had a high value. Many of the world's great trade routes were created for the purpose of trading salt. Caravans with up to 40,000 camels would traverse 400 miles across the Sahara desert to bring salt to markets in the interior of Africa.

In Roman times, Roman soldiers were paid a salt allowance for their service. This allowance was called a "salarium" which is the origin of our word "salary". This allowance is also the origin of the phrase, "He's worth his salt."

In the middle ages, salt exports and salt taxes were a major source of revenue. Major cities, like Munich and Liverpool, were built around the salt trade. Salt was so valuable, wars were fought over it.

Even in U.S. history salt has played a significant role. President Jefferson was able to win congressional support for the Lewis and Clark expedition by telling Congress that they hoped to discover a mountain of salt that was believed to be near the Missouri River. That kind of discovery would have had enormous value.

That's how valuable salt has been throughout history.



7. Read Matthew 15:13-16. Given what you've just learned from the "Brief History of Salt," what is Jesus saying in Matthew 15 about your value? What is Jesus saying about your role and purpose as a follower of Christ?
8. How does the metaphor of being a light reinforce or add to the point Jesus is making?
9. Is Jesus saying that He expects us to *become* salt and light? Explain. What is it that makes us salt and light?
10. Thinking back to how you were feeling in question 6, are you feeling better or worse now? Explain.

### APPLY

1. The slogan of a Midwestern potato chip maker is: "*You just can't stop eating 'em.*" What makes potato chips, and snacks like them, irresistible to so many people? How can that be applied to followers of Christ and their relationships with non-Christians?
2. How do followers of Christ lose their saltiness or ability to shine? Share specific examples.

3. What specific things can be done to increase our saltiness and brightness?
4. What are you going to do as a result of what you have learned from this study?

## **PRAY**

Praying for others is a way to focus God's power on them. And when people pray for you, they focus God's power on you and your needs. So, we encourage you to share a prayer request with the group. This is voluntary and there is nothing wrong with not having anything to share.

**REMEMBER: Whatever is shared is confidential.**

When everyone has had an opportunity to share, take a minute to pray for the person on your right. Also pray that God's presence in their life will continue to grow brighter.

Remember that "perfect" prayers are not ones that are eloquent. Perfect prayers are the ones that are authentic and come from your heart. That's what counts with God.

## **DAILY GROWTH**

One way to stay bright and salty is to study God's word every day. Below is a suggested daily Bible study to help you. Use it if you don't already have a daily study routine.

To help you study and apply the scriptures you will be reading, you can use the "4 C" questions below. When you're done with your study, spend a little time in prayer. You can use the 4 C questions to guide your prayer. Start with Celebrating, then Confess sin, make Commitments, and pray for your needs and requests.

### **The 4 C Questions**

**CELEBRATE:** What can you praise God for from this passage?

**CONFESS:** Does this passage convict you of something you need to confess to God?

**COMMIT:** What commitment does this passage challenge you to make?

**COMMUNICATE:** What did you learn that you could share with someone else?

Day 1: Read Luke 15:11-32. Focus on the younger son. Who or what does he represent? What does he think he's going to gain? What was the reality? After "coming to his senses" what was his solution? What did he expect from His father? What did he experience? How would he have felt? How would you feel if this were you? What lesson did the younger son learn? What is God saying to you (use the "4 C" questions)?

Day 2: Read Luke 15:11-32 again. This time focus on the father. Put yourself in his place. How would you have felt if your son treated you like that and behaved in that way? Would you long for your lost son the way the father did, or would you be so angry and hurt you would try to forget about him? How would you react when he came home compared to how the father reacted? What does this tell you about yourself? About God? About the relationship between you and God? About how God feels for the lost compared to how you feel? What is God saying to you (use the "4 C" questions)?

Day 3: Read Luke 15:11-32 again. This time focus on the older brother. Do you sympathize with his point of view? Would you react the same way or differently? Who does the older brother represent in the story? What does the father want the older brother to understand? Is the older brother thinking about the father or about himself? Is he showing love? What is God saying to you (use the "4 C" questions)?

Day 4: Read John 20:19-22. Does what Jesus said to the disciples also apply to you? What does Jesus mean when he says that he is sending them? What did the Father send Jesus to do (see Luke 19:10)? Are the disciples on their own—are you? What is God saying to you (use the “4 C” questions)?

Day 5: Read Matthew 28:16-20. Is this a suggestion? What is the mission (if you choose to accept it)? In reality, do you live your life like this is your mission? What resource does this passage say you have to accomplish this mission? Will you trust and use this resource? What is God saying to you (use the “4 C” questions)?

## Group Guidelines & Agreement

It's a good idea for every group to put words to their shared expectations and commitments. These guidelines will help you avoid unmet expectations. We recommend that you discuss and commit to these guidelines as a foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to customize these guidelines to express your group's expectations.

### **WE AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING VALUES:**

<b>Group Attendance</b>	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
<b>Safe Environment</b>	To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
<b>Be Confidential</b>	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential
<b>Spiritual Health</b>	To give group members permission to help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God
<b>Welcome Newcomers</b>	To invite our friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers
<b>Building Relationships</b>	To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly
<b>Other</b>	<hr/> <hr/>