

“A KINGDOM INFLUENCER”

Matthew 5:13-16

Howard Hendricks shared this... The greatest witness for Jesus Christ that I know anything about in the city of Dallas is not a preacher. He's an ophthalmologist. He was in the power structure of an evangelical church for twelve years and never led anybody to Jesus Christ. A group of college kids came along one day and said, "Hey, Doc, are you sharing your faith?"

The doctor said, "No, as a matter of fact, I'm not. I don't even know how to go about it."

They said, "We've got a little training program. How about getting involved in it?"

He said, "Count me in."

They taught him how to share his faith.

This guy leads people to Christ as if it's going out of style: I was way out in a remote section of India, and I use this story as an illustration, but I didn't use his name, figuring nobody knew Dr. Jack Cooper. When I finished, a doctor came up and said, "You were talking about Jack Cooper weren't you?"

I said, "How did you know?"

He said, "I went to medical school in Dallas. While I was there, I went to see Dr. Cooper about my eyes. He led me to Christ and disciplined me all the way through medical school."

Today that doctor is the only licensed neurosurgeon in that part of India. He has absolutely unbelievable impact for Jesus Christ. He will tell you it started in the office of a Dallas doctor who knew why he was here instead of in heaven. [Citation: Howard Hendricks, "Beyond the Bottom Line," *Preaching Today*, Tape No. 101.]

Let's quickly review the kingdom values Jesus espoused in the Beatitudes...

Poor in Spirit (Matt. 5:3) To be poor in spirit is to admit you desperately need God.

Jesus said, “Do you want to be blessed, that is to be happy and full of joy?” The path begins with this unusual value. You and I were raised to be self-reliant but that is not a kingdom value. In the Kingdom, those who recognize their spiritual need are blessed by knowing that *“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

Mourning (Matt. 5:4) Kingdom people mourn over sin in their heart, in their community, and in their nation.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he wept over it because of what he saw—sheep without a shepherd, hardened hearts, and a spirit of rebellion and rejection. Does your heart break for the things that break God’s heart? Though you mourn over these things, you are truly blessed, and you will be comforted for all of eternity.

Gentle (Matt. 5:5) This is submitting the control of your life to the Lord.

When God is in charge, the believer is blessed by knowing that they will inherit the earth. In the world of Jesus’ day, to be gentle (meek) was viewed as weakness.

Righteousness (Matt. 5:6) This is a desire to know, obey, and honor King Jesus with how we live our lives.

When you hunger and thirst after the ways of God, your appetite begins to change. You’re no longer hungry for stuff like popularity, prestige, power, materialism, achievement, or worldly success. You’re hungry for the things of God now. When God is in charge, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are satisfied.

Merciful (5:7) When the believer has submitted the control of his/her life to the Lord and he/she longs to obey Him, he/she finds himself become merciful to others.

Kingdom people are quick to show mercy to those in need. They value mercy because they have been shown mercy. As a result, they are on the receiving end of even more mercy.

Purity of Heart (Matt. 5:8) The pure in heart is someone who loves God with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength. The pure in heart is someone who is known for their integrity.

Jesus is saying: “Blessed are you when you rip your mask off and you’re real with God.” Then, and only then, can you truly see God.

Peacemaking (Matt. 5:9) This is the person whom God can use to bring reconciliation between two people or two groups who are at odds with each other.

They will experience a high degree of happiness and joy and they shall be called sons of God.

Persecution (Matt. 5:10-12) When you reorient your whole life towards God and his will and you are passionately seeking His righteousness, you will be persecuted.

The joy and happiness that will fill your heart and soul will be a reality. You will inherit the kingdom of heaven!

Believers who embrace and exhibit these kingdom values are “INFLUENCERS.” They are thermostats, not thermometers!

Does this not go against the prevailing attitude of today? *“I don’t wear my religion on my sleeve. It’s personal and it shouldn’t be brought into the public arena.”* These are the words we hear from politicians, the educational elite, philosophers, and even some theologians. Are they right? Can life be cleanly separated between the sacred and secular? Let’s see what Jesus had to say about this.

Take your Bible and turn to Matthew 5:13-16. This passage is part of a sermon Jesus preached to His disciples. In this sermon, He laid out for His followers how

to be a “*KINGDOM INFLUENCER*”. What does this mean? Simply put it means that your faith should influence those who live in the world system to reject that lifestyle and become followers of Jesus Christ. In our text, Jesus gives us three specific actions that will result in us becoming a kingdom influencer.

1. YOU MUST DEFINE YOUR FAITH.

Unfortunately, we have allowed the world system to define for us the meaning of our faith. Jim Nelson Black, in his book “*When Nations Die*,” wrote...

One of the greatest reasons for the decline of American society over the past century has been the tendency of Christians who have practical solutions to abandon the forum at the first sign of resistance.

What a shame! This is all the more reason why we should listen to the Lord’s clear teaching on this matter of *influence*.

Matthew 5:13–16... “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 under foot by men. **14** “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; **15** nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16** “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

I want you to notice that...

- **You are saved from something.**

That something is sin. Jesus knew the world system like the back of His hand. It was corrupt. In fact, an ancient prophet summed up the condition of the human heart like this—“***The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?***” (*Jer. 17:9*) You were caught up in the corruption of this sin-laced world at one time.

Something happened to you. You came to grips with your sin problem and realized you were hopelessly lost. The Spirit of God opened your mind to understand that Jesus Christ was/is the Son of God who died for all your sins on

the cross. Oh how precious the blood of Christ was to you. Then, the Holy Spirit revealed to you that Jesus was resurrected from the dead and was seated as eternal Lord in heaven. You turned from your sin and placed your faith in Him and you became a new person. This is when you were born again! But wait, there is more.

■ **You are saved to something.**

You are saved to live your life under the Lordship of Jesus Christ as a part of His eternal kingdom. Peter put it like this...

1 Peter 2:9–10... But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; **10** for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

Jesus fully expects His followers to be “influential” in this world. Notice how He used the simple metaphors of salt and light.

“Salt” Roman soldiers were often paid in salt. In the eastern culture of Jesus’ day, salt was used in the establishing of covenants and the offering of sacrifices (Lev. 2:13; 2 Chron. 13:5). Jesus’ hearers, whether Jew or Gentile, would have understood the significance of this reference to salt.

Salt had many purposes such as flavoring food, healing wounds, and creating thirst so the body would be properly hydrated. But the primary purpose was the preservation of food. So, Jesus clearly spelled out for His followers that they were saved to influence the world and prevent its corruption.

“Light” Salt is a hidden but powerful influence. Light is a visible yet powerful influence. To add to His description, the Lord said that believers should be like ***“a city on a hill that cannot be hidden.”*** So much for the idea that Christians should keep their faith to themselves! Paul described our responsibility like this...

Philippians 2:15... so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world....

I want you to notice how Jesus emphasized what you are saved to by the words He used.

“You” is emphatic. The idea is this—*“You are the only salt of the earth...You are the only light of the world.”*

“You” is plural. This means that every member of His kingdom is responsible for being salt and light.

“Are” stresses being rather than doing. As believers, you are salt and light by nature.

Your faith should be influential. It becomes this as we properly define our faith. There is another action we must take.

2. YOU MUST DEFEND YOUR FAITH.

Living out your faith in a world that is inherently corrupt exposes it to defilement. Notice...

■ The danger

Jesus described the danger as being like salt that has lost its saltiness and light that is hidden away. Now it is evident that Jesus is describing contamination here. When people in the first century discovered contaminated salt, they would throw it out on the road where it would be trampled into the ground.

Believers can be contaminated by the world system. As a result, they lose their effectiveness in influencing the world around them. Paul mentioned this when he wrote...

1 Corinthians 9:26–27... Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; **27** but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

*Steve Lawson Illustration

■ The defense

You must guard your heart and determine to live under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit. You must present the members of your body to God as instruments of righteousness for His name's sake. Believer, don't become like the world and lose your ability to influence the world around you.

Yes, your faith was meant to be influential. So far, we have discovered two actions that are absolutely critical. First, we must define our faith. Second, we must defend our faith. Thirdly...

3. WE MUST DISPLAY OUR FAITH.

Christian faith was never meant to be hidden or locked away in one's personal life. We must display our faith...

■ Publicly

Jesus said we are to let our ***"light shine before men that they may see your good works (16)."*** The word "good" is a picture of attractiveness. The world around us should see Jesus Christ Himself in our lives! We don't create "good works." Rather it is something our Lord does in us and through us as we abide in Him.

Ephesians 2:10... For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

■ Purposefully

Why do we let our light shine? Jesus said our purpose is to glorify God. This is the supreme calling of life! Let me ask you, do those around you glorify God because of the way you live your life?

Are you a thermometer or a thermostat? The Lord Jesus wants you to be a ***"KINGDOM INFLUENCER."*** Tonight, we have discovered three specific actions that will make us influential. Do you remember what they are?

- 1. You must define your faith.**
- 2. You must defend your faith.**
- 3. You must display your faith.**

Don't ever forget. You are salt and light. You have been saved to make a difference in this world!