

Be Different (Part I) – Salt & Light

1/10/2010

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. The subject matter for this series is going to revolve around relationships. Why are relationships so difficult?

This question may well evoke a pretty broad set of responses, including things like:

- Because they involve other people
- Because we are imperfect people with rough edges, and when two rough edges rub together it produces friction
- Because we all have expectations, but they are not necessarily the same ones
- Because we try to change other people to be the way we want them to be
- Because we tend to want to control things
- Because humans are complex social beings

2. The scriptural basis for this series is the Sermon on the Mount found in Matt. 5-6, described by Pastor Steve as the bedrock on which Christianity is founded. It describes a special kind of relationship known as discipleship. What is a disciple?

It means to be one who follows or walks along side a leader. It is one who is trying to emulate his leader. It is one who has taken the wise counsel of a friend. In the days of Jesus, this was the primary pathway to education. One became a student (disciple) of a mature, learned person and tried to soak up all the knowledge possible by being around them constantly, listening to all they said.

3. Read Matt. 5:1-10, often known as The Beatitudes. What strikes you as different or unusual about these verses?

They are not prescriptive, but descriptive. These are not commandments for what we are to do, but are used to give us a vision of what holy living entails. For those in the audience who exemplified one or more of these characteristics, it was a reinforcement they were on the right path. For the religious leaders of the day (who likely exemplified none of these characteristics), it was a wake up call. For those who were counting on the Messiah to come as a military and political leader, it was a clear message that this man had something totally different in mind.

4. Jesus said that those who practiced these characteristics were “blessed”. What does that mean to you?

They were fortunate; they were feeling close to God; they had a happiness or joy that came not from material things, but from the Holy Spirit.

5. Read on to Matt. 5:11-12. Here we find the first use of the word “you”. What has changed?

The word “you” is used several times in these two verses. However, now we are talking about persecution and receiving evil deeds. It may well be that Jesus was preparing his new disciples for what was to come. If they followed Jesus, their lives would be hard, so they needed to enter with their eyes wide open.

6. Now read on to Matt. 5:13-16. It talks about salt and light. What are some uses of salt and light that might help us understand these verses?

- a) salt is used to give good flavor to food; it is a preservative; it cleanses; it is a necessary nutrient (electrolyte). In all of these things, it enhances or makes the thing better. However, too much can be deadly.
- b) light shines to illuminate our world so that we can see things more clearly, so that we can be more effective in our efforts, and so that plants will grow (photosynthesis).

7. Given those descriptions, how can we be the “salt” and “light” of the world?

We can be salt by enhancing the lives of those with whom we come in contact by adding a new seasoning to their lives in the form of the Good News. Bombarding them with too much can be deadly, but sharing some key information that will get them started in the right direction can have eternal ramifications. We can be light by being an example of what righteous (Christ-like) living looks like, showing a focus on “you” rather than on “me”. If each of God’s people do some little things, they all of us together can change the world.

8. Pastor Steve said that relationships are not property. What does that mean to you?

They are not things to be manipulated, owned, bought, or sold. They are interactions between people in which we can enhance the quality of life for all parties involved (including ourselves) or make things worse. We can be Jesus to others. We need to be concerned with whether the other person is happy, not whether I am happy.