



NAC-USA
DEVELOPMENT
INSTITUTE

Do Good to
Please God

Salt and
Light

**MIDWEEK
SCRIPT**

Ask, Seek,
Knock

2019

August

Session 1 – Do Good to Please God

Welcome to the month of August. This month our service theme centers on, “Our Conduct.” Our midweek discussions will study what Jesus Christ said about our conduct in the Sermon on the Mount.

We will start with diving deeper into what Jesus said about doing good in Matthew 6:1-4:

Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Jesus is making the point that we should serve and do good out of love for God and each other, and for no other reason. In all that we do, we should ask ourselves, “What is my motivation?” When the love of God continues to develop and grow in us, we allow His Spirit to move us to do good. This in turn will glorify God and please Him. The love of God was poured into our soul on the day of our Holy Sealing. We want to develop into this love and have it become a driving force in our lives. What are some of the forces today which can hinder this love?

Our Chief Apostle described this force today as the “cult of the self.” It is a real scourge of our time. It is absolutely incompatible with Christian faith. To live in Christ, we must “crucify” the self, and allow the Spirit of Jesus in us to develop.

God does not ask us to discard our personality and will, but rather align our will with His, and renounce the cult of the self, which manifests itself through three traits:

1. Egoism – which consists of seeking the satisfaction of our own needs and desires without taking into account those of our neighbor. We could think of this as “**Me first.**”
2. Egocentrism – which we could think of as self-centeredness or “**It’s all about me.**” The egocentric considers the outside world only in terms of their own person.
3. Individualism – is when a person considers themselves more important than the community to which they belong, and their interests take precedence over the common good. Basically, their mindset is, “**I am better.**”

Life in Christ has very concrete repercussions on our behavior, first within society. We are aware of our responsibilities, and willingly contribute to our community. We do not retreat into ourselves under the pretext that we do not need anyone or do not care about them. Even in personal relationships, we seek the happiness of each other, and build them on Jesus’ teaching about love. Another place to do good is in the congregation. Within the body of Christ, the well-being of each member depends on all. The love of Christ prompts us to sacrifice some of our personal interests for the good of the congregation.

Let us follow the advice of Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:20:

It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

When Paul made this statement, he did not mean that our faith prevents us from loving and enjoying the pleasures of life. We can work for our personal and professional success, but money, pleasure, and glory do not fully satisfy our soul. Rather, it is our faith in Christ that will give us an abundant and fulfilled life.

Doing good does not call into question our uniqueness or our personality. On the contrary, it contributes to the fulfillment of the “good works” that God has called us to do. We become the person that God created us to be, with our gifts, passions, and interests. When we follow His calling to do good, we will love as He loves, become a blessing for others, and experience a fulfilled life in Christ.

Session 2 – Salt and Light

Welcome back! Today we will continue our discussion about our conduct. As disciples of Jesus Christ, our conduct speaks volumes to the world around us about what we believe and whom we are following. We want to put Jesus on display through what we say and do, but that's only possible when our character is rooted in Him. In today's session, we will be studying another passage from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus speaks to His disciples about being salt and light.

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus outlines the uniqueness of the life of His disciples, and insists that their character is to have a penetrating, preserving, and transforming effect on those around them. In these verses, Jesus says, *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

What is meant by the two metaphors used in these verses? How are followers of Jesus to be both salt and light?

First, we recognize that both have a profound effect upon their environments.

Salt is very useful and beneficial in a number of ways. In the Old Testament, it was used primarily as a purifying agent. We also know salt to be helpful as a preservative and to provide seasoning for food. Just as salt is beneficial for a number of reasons, so should followers of Jesus Christ be. *You are the salt of the earth* means that as disciples, we are to be a purifying agent in this corrupt world by living in a righteous manner and being faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ. We can speak words that encourage, uplift, and edify in the midst of rotten conversation, whose only aim is to destroy. Season your surroundings and the people you encounter by sharing the love of Jesus Christ and the peace that He set within your soul. Invite them to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. And, be the one who helps preserve hope in the midst of the most challenging times of life. How can you be a purifying agent in your workplace? In your neighborhood? In your family? Are you seasoning your world with the message of the gospel? Do you help preserve hope?

We don't want to slip into unrighteous living that steals away from the mission that Jesus called us to. Instead, it is important that we seek the Holy Spirit every day in order to have the strength and courage to have a profound effect upon our world.

Jesus is the light of the world. As His disciples, we shine His light. What does that mean? Wherever we go, we should illuminate that place with the light of Jesus! Just as we read in the book of Acts, the apostles and the first Christians changed the world with their testimony, so we should as well. Are we inclined to hide ourselves away? Are we shy to speak about our faith in Jesus Christ? Do we hold back from helping friends and strangers? Be encouraged by the words of Jesus, *Let your light shine!*

Why does Jesus call us to do this? So that those around us will recognize our good works, and then they will glorify, not us, but our Father in heaven. That is our purpose. That is the will of our God – that all we do glorifies Him. So when we are *the salt of the earth* and *the light of the world*, we aren't putting ourselves on display – we are putting Jesus, the One who glorified His Father, on display for all to see in hopes that our world will be changed for good.

Session 3 – Ask, Seek, Knock

Welcome to our last small group session for August. In this session, we'll look at another of Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount to help us understand how we can conduct ourselves, so that our actions are aligned with God's will.

In Matthew 7, we read: *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets* (Matthew 7:7-12).

In these verses, Jesus is urging us to pray. God has given us the gift of prayer so that we may seek Him, come into His presence, express our worship, and bring our petitions to Him. It is in prayer that we develop our relationship with Him, a relationship that is built on trust. We trust that when we ask, seek, and knock, He is there to answer and guide us according to His will. We believe God is always willing to help us when we call on Him.

However, sometimes there are circumstances in life that cause us to doubt. Perhaps we question if God will be there when we seek Him, or we doubt that He can help us in our need. Maybe we worry that if we express our doubts, God will not help us because our faith is not great enough. Doubt in and of itself is not evil, but the devil can use doubt to separate us from God.

When we find ourselves in moments like this, we must remember Jesus' words – *For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened*. God doesn't want our doubt to be a reason for us not to come to Him. He understands that as humans, we will be inclined to doubt in certain situations because it is an effect of the ability to reason, which is a trait given to us by God. So what is His solution for our doubt? He does not turn away from us. Instead, He invites us to seek Him! He asks us to come to Him in prayer so that we can be renewed in our faith and trust in Him.

We see an example of this in Mark 9, when a man approaches Jesus and asks Him to heal his sick son. *Jesus said to him, "If you believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:22-24). When the father recognized that he did not have enough faith for the Lord's help, he could have made the decision to leave in disappointment. However, he turned to Jesus, even with his doubt and unbelief. He asked for help, believed, and he received it!

God gives His people the assurance that He will listen to their prayers, and that if they truly seek Him, they will find Him. In Scripture, we can read what the Lord told the Jewish people through the prophet, Jeremiah: *Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart* (Jeremiah 29:12-13). Even when we doubt, if it is our earnest desire to seek the Lord, we will find Him. He will not hide from us.

How can we search for God with all our heart? We come to Him with humility and thankfulness. When we seek Him in this way, we will feel His presence in our prayers. Especially in times of doubt, we persevere in asking, seeking, and knocking. We continually pursue Him in prayer.

God desires to give us good things according to His will. When we come to Him in prayer, we express to Him that we want these gifts. We need His help, His grace, and His love. And when we embrace these riches that He so freely gives, we in turn share them with others, so that they may come to see that God also longs to have a relationship with them.