

## Be Different In Your Witness (A Christian's Influence)

### Introduction:

Each year Time Magazine publishes its "100 most influential people" issue. Categories include: 1) Leaders and Revolutionaries, 2) Builders and Titans, 3) Artists and Entertainers, 4) Heroes and Icons and 5) Scientists and Thinkers. Without even going over who is on the list, which has only one Christian leader, Rick Warren, on it, the inference of such a list is this: **"THAT ARE WORLD IS MADE UP OF TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE: THE INFLUENCERS AND THE INFLUENCED."** There are those who are **INFLUENCING** (people on Time Magazine's list) and those of us who are being **INFLUENCED**. Those who are casting a **SHADOW** and those who enveloped by one. Those who create a **WAKE** and those who are caught up in one. Those who are **LEADING** and those who are following. So the question before you and I this: **which category are we: An INFLUENCER or one who is INFLUENCED?**

Before I show you, who we should be from the text, let's talk a bit first **WHY** we tend to find ourselves in the **INFLUENCED** category rather than the **INFLUENCER** one.

1. Don't **BELIEVE** it.

Not me. You must be mistaken. That in an elite group. I don't belong there. After all they folks are...and the excuses come.

2. Don't **HAVE** it.

I am **NOT** a scientist, rock star or politician. My **personality** is **NOT** the type. My **experience** is **NOT** good enough. I do **NOT** have the **time**.

Note: Be who you are. Jesus never asked us to be someone else to be an Influencer.

3. Don't WANT it.

I would rather remain where I am. I don't like making waves. After all, the current of the world is flowing fine without me. *Like the Hobbits in the Lord of the Ring, our preference would rather be to remain in the Shire.*

Well, this morning I have a “word from our Lord” to all those Frodo's out there who want to remain unbothered in the Shire: “I am sorry to say, the ring just landed in your hand and the future course of humanity for many people is in your fate.” What are you going to do with it? Are you going to pretend you never found the ring? Are you going to bury it? Or are you going to fulfill your destiny and leave the comfortable Shire to face real foes to save “Middle, Top and Bottom” Earth?

In a moment I will show you from the text that **JESUS EXPECTS US TO BE AN INFLUENCER**. Whether you knew it or not, perhaps you are just figuring it out right now. **YOU ARE AN INFLUENCER. TO FOLLOW JESUS IS TO BE AN INFLUENCER. YOU were CREATED for it. YOU were CALLED for it. YOU were MADE for it. And to be honest, you and I don't really live life, really live, until we find our way into it. The road MORE traveled is for the INFLUENCED. Those who follow. The road LESS traveled for the INFLUENCERS. Those who risk. It is theologically and practically impossible to follow Jesus down the road less traveled and remain in the INFLUENCED category. If you follow Jesus you will become an INFLUENCER.**

**(REVIEW) IF YOU HAVE FACED “YOUR CONDITION” (HUMILITY), “YOUR RELATIONSHIP” (COMPASSION), YOU WILL BEGIN TO EMBRACE “YOUR INFLUENCE” (CALLING) TO THIS WORLD. (Comment on progression and path)**

**Text:**

Turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew 5 and let's discover together **what Jesus has to say about YOUR INFLUENCE IN THIS WORLD.**

Let me read you what is before us and then we can talk about the structure.

<sup>13</sup>“You are the **SALT** of the **earth**. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

<sup>14</sup> You are the **LIGHT** of the **world**. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

<sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

<sup>16</sup> **IN THE SAME WAY**, let your light shine before men, that they may see your **GOOD DEEDS** and **PRAISE** your Father in heaven.”

Mt 5:13-16

The most critical phrase in this segment, or pericope, is “**in the same way**”. This is a **RESULT** statement. So we have two metaphors of what we do, **SALT** and **LIGHT** and then a **CONCLUDING** statement that speaks of actions of what the listener does - **SEE OUR GOOD DEEDS** and **WORSHIP**.

**(+) Salt + (+) Light → Good Deeds (by You) + Worship to God (by Others)**

## The NEED for influence: the decaying earth and the dark world:

The first truth of this text that jumps out at me is Jesus' view of the world. *Traveling to Disneyland puts my senses on overload. When I go to there, I enter into a pristine world where practically nothing is out of place. Every sense is energized. Everything looks pristine. Perfect. Yet, when I drive a few blocks away or a few exits away on highway 5 I begin to see a different world. Our tendency is to stay in one world and avoid the other. Besides 9-11, the darkest the world came for me was at a Bosnian city on the Danube called Vukovar.*

Even though there is much talk about "ENLIGHTENMENT" today both in the sciences and the eastern religions, **IN REALITY THE WORLD IS ALL DARKNESS.** The **GLORY** we see in this world is but a shell of the perfect condition that Jesus saw before sin entered the world. According to words of Jesus found in this text, **THE WORLD IS A DARK PLACE WITH LITTLE OR NO LIGHT OF ITS OWN.**

*When children are abandoned by their parents whether literally or with their careers, when gangs rage terror in the streets, when kids carry guns, when drugs control a life, which men choose the fantasy of pornography rather than the reality and beauty of their own wives, when abuse, neglect, addiction and rape enter the home, the world grows black. Jesus is right. The world is truly a DARK place.*

In addition, Jesus said the world is **DECAYING**. To say it another way, the world is effected with a **DISEASE** that will eventually destroy it. If I recall my engineering days correctly, the world is in decay because of something called **The Second Law of Thermodynamics** or **The Law of Energy Decay**. It states that: "Every system left to its own devices always tends to move from order to disorder,

its energy tending to be transformed into lower levels of availability, finally reaching the state of complete randomness and unavailability for further work.” Meaning: **THINGS ROT**. They naturally go from good to bad, order to disorder, stability to decomposition. Unless some outside agent intervenes, this natural phenomenon will take place in every corner of the universe.

*One of the curses at any job is to clean the office refrigerator. I hate it when people bring their lunch, place it in the refrigerator and then forget about it. If evolution exists, this might be where it happens. The smell, the mold, the decay. Just recently, I found some chinese food in the church refrigerator. It was nasty stuff... fuzzy stuff that moved. Rather than toss it out, I had it shipped to Stanford to examine it for new life forms.*

But I believe Jesus here is not making a scientific statement on physical condition of our world. Though applicable, I believe He is speaking here about **THE HEART OF EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD**. Because of sin, **THE MORAL CONDITION OF MANKIND IS UTTER DARKNESS** and under the cover of the blackness, people perform several vile deeds: slander, stealing, murder, adultery and rebellion against authority. In the same manner, Jesus is saying **THE WORLD IS A DECAYING PLACE WHICH LEFT TO ITS OWN WITH ROT AND DIE**.

Thus, from Jesus' perspective, the world is polluted, foul and offensive. Its tendency is to evil and wars. Though God made the world perfect, sin has made it **corrupt and vile**. That's the world from Jesus' standpoint, Not to encouraging is it?

**WHAT'S THEN IS THE RESOLUTION?**

### The type of influence: SALT and LIGHT:

Jesus response to this cosmic calamity is quite extraordinary. He takes two indispensable household commodities, two items that everyone (rich or poor) would have been quite familiar with, two products of nature and uses them as remedies to the plagues of the planet.

#### SALT:

**The first is salt. “You are the salt of the earth.”** In our day, salt is primarily used as a **spice**. We put it on meat, veggies and sauces to bring a certain flavor that we desire, a distinct flare to a dull meal, a little seasoning to some tough meat. There are some of us who can’t take a bite in a meal unless you put a few dashes of salt on the plate. This, though, is **not** the picture Jesus is trying to describe to us. He is not saying, **“You are the spice of life, the zest of the party, the amusement for the discouraged. Christians are not the spice (or entertainment) of the world.** No, Jesus is pointing to salts primary use in the first century and that was as a **PRESERVATIVE**. Salt’s main function therefore, is **negative rather than positive**. Centuries before refrigeration had been invented salt was used to keep meat wholesome and to prevent decay. **Salt was rubbed into the meat to stem its natural course of decay.**

A few points I draw from this metaphor. First, the **PROXIMITY** of salt to be effective. **GOD PLACES CHRISTIANS IN SECULAR SOCIETY TO HINDER THE PROCESS TO DECAY (2x).** Not to remain in ecclesiastical salt shakers, but to get out of the salt shaker and prevent decay. In order to prevent decay, in order to stem putrefaction, in order to slow down the collapse of cells, **salt has to get out of the**

salt shaker and be rubbed right into the meat. Our place as Christians is to be rubbed into meat, to stop it from going bad. And when society does go bad, Christians tend to throw up our hands and say, “We live in the last days.” Which is the most ridiculous conclusion we can make. We should NOT condemn the world if we notice deterioration. One can hardly blame it for doing that. That is its natural course. **THE REAL QUESTION SHOULD BE WHERE IS THE SALT?” (2X).** If meat goes bad, where was the salt? Did salt every get close enough to prevent decay?

Second, **SALT ALSO HAS A BITE TO IT.** Rub it into a wound and you will definitely feel it. In the same way, there will be times when **WE ARE CALLED TO CONFRONT AND DENOUNCE WHAT IS NOT RIGHT, INJUSTICE, ABUSE, AND NEGLECT.** We are NOT the honey pot of the world. Jesus did not say, “You are the honey of the world.’ We are called to evaluate the social structures of this world and be the moral compass of society and the conscious of heaven on earth. It is one thing to give someone a meal. It is quite another to confront cycles of **POVERTY.** It is one thing to throw a few bucks in the pot to help people dying with **AIDS,** it is quite another to create **SUPPORT GROUPS, HOSPICES, AND EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES** to walk with people and family’s who have been plagued by this disease. It is one thing to carry a sign protesting abortion, it is quite another to take an **UNWED MOTHER IN YOUR HOME** and help her get on her feet. In a nutshell, we are called to **EVANGELISM** and **SOCIAL ACTION.** To bear the Gospel and to provide a meal. As John Stott says, “To try to improve society is not worldliness, but love.”

**Prop 8 and marriages.**

So we see that the world decays like rotten fish or meat **and only the church can hinder its decay.** The most powerful restraining agent in a sinful society is not the government or the military, not the UN or NATO, **but the church.** **The church is the salt of the earth. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?**

### **LIGHT:**

The second metaphor Jesus uses is LIGHT. “You are the LIGHT of the world.” *Need for light is obvious. Light is such a common commodity in our world that we expect it as much as food or water. In preparing for this message, I decided to count how many times I flipped a switch in a building or in my car to obtain some light so I could see. I started in the morning and ended when I brushed my teeth and went to bed. Do you know what I counted...over 30 times. Undoubtedly, light is a resource none of us can live without. And from this picture we gather these 2 points.*

One of the first things light does is to **EXPOSE THE DARKNESS AND THE THINGS THAT BELONG TO THE DARKNESS.** Have you ever noticed that the worst vices of mankind always happen under cover of darkness? Why? Because light exposes such evil deeds and brings shame to those who do them. **ONE OF THE TESTS OF TRUE CHARACTER OF ANY PERSON IS WHAT HE OR SHE DOES IN THE DARK.** As Plato says, “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark: the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light”. So we find that people would rather stay in the darkness because for *“fear that their deeds would be exposed in the light.”* They would rather cower in the night than live free in the dawn of day. They would rather

make critical decision based upon imperfect data or have no information at all rather, than step into the light and be exposed.

*Back in the days before electricity, a tightfisted old farmer was taking his hired man to task for carrying a lighted lantern when he went to call on his best girl. "Why," he exclaimed, "when I went a-courtin' I never carried one of them things. I always went in the dark." "Yes," the hired man said wryly, "and look what you got!"*

Light not only reveals the hidden things of darkness, it also **ILLUMINES** a path so we can walk in it. Oddly enough many people in our world today don't want to know there is a path to travel, a course to follow, a map to guide them in this journey called life. **Dark ignorance is preferred over illuminating truth.** *There was a day when pursuing truth or light was an admirable goal. Now it is but a yawn. The Christian pilgrim comes into the setting and with great enthusiasm and fervor as he/she describes how they have found the true meaning of life in Jesus Christ. In essence, they tell the world with great joy, "I have found the light." With casual respect the world listens, but in the end they say, "I am glad that religion works for you" and then they walk away back into the darkness. I don't want the respect of the world. I want people to find the true light which is Jesus Christ.*

Light **EXPOSES** any pitfalls or debris that may hinder our course and light **ILLUMINES** a path so we can walk and it (2x).

For these people who are acclimated to the darkness, there is a sense that there is no need for light. Yet Scriptures says, ***"the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."***

## The RESULTS of influence:

How do we respond to this? Let's look at the text again. But Jesus says in our text that light goes way beyond proclamation. Light in this text is "GOOD WORKS." "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." Notice there is nothing here on WORDS. For a message on our witness, don't you find this strange? Jesus doesn't enter into the HOW TO debate on sharing except for this fact (Testimonial, Confrontational, Serving, Power, Social): **YOUR LIFESTYLE BETTER SPEAKS MUCH LOUDER THAN YOUR WORDS.**

Good works are the resume of the believer. Good works are acts of love as well as faith. They express our love for God as well as our care for our classmate or co-worker. Works are practical deeds of compassion. Visible Christianity. Remember, these are good works that point people to God not to ourselves. If they do not point others beyond us, then something is wrong. *The lampstand is not significant, but the light that comes from the lampstand is. The lampstand is merely a vessel to bring light to those who are in its presence. Just as the moon reflects the sun's light, we are called to reflect the light of Christ to others in the world.* Open, honest living to maximize the effectiveness of light. His light, not our light. That's the light the world needs to see. Flight into the invisible is denial of the call.

What happens when people see this? They will **GLORIFY GOD** for they will want to embody the same spirit that compels us to serve and be salt and light. Literally, **THEIR WORSHIP TO GOD IS CONNECTED TO OUR GOOD DEEDS (2X).** If

true, then the opposite is also true. No worship to God because they see nothing in our deeds.

*One Sunday morning in 1865, a black man entered a fashionable church in Richmond, Virginia. When Communion was served, he walked down the aisle and knelt at the altar. A rustle of resentment swept the congregation. How dare he! After all, believers in that church used the common cup. Suddenly a distinguished layman stood up, stepped forward to the altar, and knelt beside the black man. With Robert E. Lee setting the example, the rest of the congregation soon followed his lead.*

### **The person of influence: YOU**

You and you only (emphatic nature of the metaphors) are the earth's salt and world's light. Not the preacher, visiting evangelist or the book you gave. Bring people to productions don't always work. And therefore the condition follows--- don't mess it up, don't fail to serve, don't forget what and who you are. **WE MUST ACCEPT OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PRESERVE AND TO PROJECT LIGHT. WE ARE ALL TO ASSUME OUR CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY TO INFLUENCE THIS WORLD.**

**Jesus closing with two warnings.** "If salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men." *Now strictly speaking, salt can never lose its saltiness. If I remember my chemistry class in college correctly, sodium chloride is quite a stable element that is resistant to much attack. Nevertheless, salt can become contaminated by mixture of impurities and then it becomes useless if not hazardous to one's health.* **If Christians become assimilated to non-Christians and**

contaminated by the impurities of the world, they lose their influence. In order to be effective, influential voices in this world, Christians must retain the Christlikeness of the Beatitudes as salt retains its saltiness.

The Beatitudes describe the essential character of the disciples of Jesus. **Our influence depends on our character (2x).** The influence of Christians in and on society depends on being **distinct, not identical.** “The glory of the Gospel is that when the church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it.” (Dr. L. Jones). If we lose this character, we have become useless, ineffective, impotent. We must be careful then how we walk. It's tough to be in the dark and not let the dark get in you. The unending struggle for the Christian is to walk in the light and at the same time keep moving into the shadows. George Truett once said, “**You are either being corrupted by the world or you are salting it.**” There is no middle ground.

The second warning: *“A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.”* In other words, **YOU WERE SAVED TO SHINE.** We are to be in prominent places to shine so the maximum effectiveness of our light can be reached. *VCC, this verse, perhaps more than any other, I have heard quoted about this church. It certainly fits our geography, we are a church on a hill. But does it fit OUR CONVICTION, OUR IDENTITY, OUR CALLING? Building a new church building on a hill does nothing to reach people for Jesus. There has to be the understanding, THAT MY PERSONAL LIGHT WILL SHINE BRIGHT FOR JESUS. I WILL ALLOW NOTHING TO HINDER IT. NOTHING TO DETER CHRIST IN ME FROM BEING SEEN.*

Yet, you may feel ineffective, weak, unable to do much for anyone. Remember, **IT ONLY TAKES A PINCH OF SALT TO SAVOR THE ENTIRE MEAL. IT ONLY TAKES A SINGLE CANDLE TO ILLUMINE A DARK CELLAR.** This is the influence of Jesus through his followers in society. Don't underestimate the power and the influence that even a small minority can exert in the community.

*Dr. John Geddie went to Aneityum, island nation in the South Pacific, in 1848 and worked there for God for 24 years. On the tablet erected to his memory these words are inscribed: **When he landed, in 1848, there were no Christians. When he left, in 1872, there were no heathen.***

**Conclusion:**

Salt and light - two metaphors - following a series of "blesseds." Suddenly we see our reason for being. We have worth. We are needed. We are influential. Our lives count. Just a small amount of salt added to any recipe makes a huge difference. In the same manner, each one of us make a huge impact to our world. It's the same with light. One lighted candle pushing the darkness away and clears the road so we can walk. The light in you, the light of Christ, shows people how to find the road less traveled.

**If you are a follower of Jesus you are an INFLUENCER (2x).** I wonder if Heaven had a magazine and say it was called "Eternity" rather than "Time". Who would be on it? Without getting into ranking question, I know this to be true, **"We ALL should be on it."**

*"No life ever lived on this planet has been so influential in the affairs of men as that of Christ. Through Him, millions of people have had their inner conflicts*

*resolved. Through Him, hundreds of millions have been lifted from illiteracy and ignorance and have been placed upon the road of growing intellectual freedom and control over the physical environment. In His name, more has done more to allay the physical ills of disease and famine than any other impulse, and because of His words millions have been emancipated from chattel. He has protected tens of millions from exploitation by their fellows, and He has been the most fruitful source of movements to lessen the horrors of war and to put the relations of men and nations on the basis of justice and peace." (Kenneth Latourette)*



BILL  
HYBELS

Just  
**Walk**  
Across  
the  
**Room**

SIMPLE STEPS  
POINTING PEOPLE  
TO FAITH

ZONDERVAN



# TIME

## THE TIME 100

**The World's  
Most Influential  
People**

Michelle Obama *by Oprah Winfrey*  
 Rush Limbaugh *by Glenn Beck*  
 George Clooney *by Reno*  
 Plus 97 More

# CHOOSE

the road less traveled  
studies in the sermon on the mount



condition  
(humility)



relationships  
(compassion)



influence  
(calling)



# TEXT STRUCTURE

(+) Salt + (+) Light



Good Deeds  
(by You)



Worship  
to God  
(by Others)

# THE WORLD FOR



THE WORLD IS A

WALK  
DAILY  
DIPLOMA

THE WORLD IS A

DELICIOUS  
PARTY



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# THE RESULTS OF INFERENCE

**“good works”  
(by you)**

**&**

**“worship  
of God”  
(by others)**

# THE PERSON OF INFLUENCE

# WORLD



# CHOOSE

the road less traveled  
studies in the sermon on the mount

