Preschool–Grade 6

Salt and Light

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: Jesus doesn't say "try to be" salt and light; He says "ye are." Don't lose your savour and don't hide your light, so people see your good works and glorify God.
Bible passage: Matthew 5:13–16. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." *Matthew 5:14 (KJV)* and "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." *Matthew 5:16 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 5:1–16, John 8:12 and Ephesians 5:8. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: Can't Be Hid (5–10 minutes)

Give the class two minutes to list on the board as many things as they can that are impossible to hide (a sunrise, a city lit up at night, a fire alarm, a skunk). Then ask: *What makes these impossible to hide? Should a Christian be easy or hard to spot? Why?* Say: "Jesus used two everyday things, salt and light, to tell His disciples who they are."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Matthew 5:1–2, then 5:13–16. Students take turns, a verse each. Old words in this passage:

- **multitudes** (5:1): big crowds; **when he was set**: when He sat down
- **ye** (5:13): you (all of you); **savour**: taste; **wherewith shall it be salted**: how can it be made salty again?
- **thenceforth** (5:13): from then on; **trodden under foot of men**: walked on by people
- **set on an hill** (5:14): built on top of a hill
- **bushel** (5:15): a basket or bowl for measuring grain; **candlestick**: a stand that holds a candle up high
- **so shine** (5:16): shine in that way; **before men**: in front of people; **glorify**: praise and honor

Look closer. Point out these details with the class:

- **"Ye are."** Jesus didn't say "become" salt and light. He told His disciples what they are (5:13–14). Being salt and light comes with following Him.
- **Salt can lose its savour.** Salt that has lost its taste is "good for nothing" (5:13). A follower of Jesus who stops being different stops doing the good salt does. Mark 9:50 adds, "Salt is good… Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another."

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- **The point of a light is to be seen.** No one lights a candle to put it under a bushel (5:15). Hiding your faith is like lighting a candle and covering it.
- **Whose glory?** People see "your good works," but they "glorify your Father which is in heaven" (5:16). The goal isn't to be noticed; it's that God gets the praise.
- **Where the light comes from.** Jesus said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness" (John 8:12). Paul wrote, "now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8).

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. What is the difference between "be salt" and "ye are the salt" (5:13)? Why does it matter?
2. Salt makes food taste good (Job 6:6). In your school, team or family, what does being "salt" look like?
3. What makes a Christian lose their savour? How do you keep it?
4. What "bushels" are most common for people your age (5:15)? Which one is yours?
5. How can you shine without showing off, so people glorify God and not you (5:16)?
6. Ephesians 5:8 says "ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." What changes when someone follows Jesus?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: in Matthew 5:14, **set on an hill** means built on top of a hill. In Matthew 5:16, **so shine** means shine in that way; **before men** means in front of people; **glorify** means praise and honor; **your Father which is in heaven** means God.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 5:14 this week; keep working on Matthew 5:16 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "We were darkness, but now we can be light in the Lord (Ephesians 5:8). God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Where is it hardest for me to let my light shine: at school, online, on a team, at home?
2. What is my "bushel," the thing I use to hide my faith?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you shine for Him so others glorify Him.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: take one "bushel" off: do one good work in a place where you usually hide your faith, and give God the credit if anyone notices.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for Jesus, the light of the world. Keep us salty and keep our light shining. Take away anything we hide behind, and let people see our good works and glorify You. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: Matthew 5:13 says salt that has lost its savour is "cast out, and ... trodden under foot of men." Keep it simple and hopeful: the point is to stay true to Jesus. Don't use it to frighten anyone.

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