

Share your short, personal, spiritual story with one other person in the group.

We can freely talk about sports, movies, events, etc. with no problem whatsoever. Why do we sometimes find it challenging to share how God has worked in our lives?

How can we overcome insecurity of talking to others about Christ?

When you hear the word “evangelist” what image pops into your mind? Is it a negative or positive image and why?

Who are some people you know in your church that seem to be especially effective at connecting others to God or bringing them to church? Do they fit the evangelist stereotype? Why or why not?

We are not all necessarily gifted evangelists, but we are all called to have spiritual impact in our world, helping others know Christ. Look at the following passages to determine various ways we are to have influence.

Influence 1

Matthew 5:13 (NIV)

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.

Influence: SALT

SALT FACTS:

- Salt was valued so highly it was even used as a form of currency and, in some cultures, had greater value than gold. The word “salary” referred to soldiers who were paid in salt. The saying, “worth his salt” referred to someone worthy of the wage they were paid.
- There are over 14,000 known uses for salt
- The word “salad” comes from Roman practice of putting salt on their vegetables
- The human body contains 250 grams (1/2 pound) of salt
- There is a 1500 acre salt mine over 1000 ft below the city of Detroit with 100 miles of roads
- Salt was to be added to some offerings in the Old Testament
- Christopher Columbus was on a journey to bring back salt when he discovered North America
- Consumption of salt is necessary for survival
- Many of Napoleon’s soldiers died from lack of salt as they returned from Russia.
- Too much salt contributes to heart disease and many other ailments.

Describe the effect salt has on food.

Salt is used to both preserve food by limiting the growth of undesired bacteria and to season food to bring out its flavor. It only takes a small amount of salt to influence an entire meal.

What symbolism does salt hold in the Bible?

Salt carried a variety of meanings in scripture, depending on the context.

Purification and Preservation:

As salt was used to purify and preserve food, it became symbolic of preserving life, holding off corruption and even death. An example of this occurs when Elisha sprinkles salt in a water spring to purify it and bring life back to the land (2Kings 2:21).

Salt was eaten at meals to signify lasting relationship and friendship.

God refers to a “Covenant of Salt” indicating the permanence or preservation of the relationship (Leviticus 2:13). Salt was added to some offerings with this symbolism of relationship permanence in mind.

Seasoning:

Salt was used either to season food or, in some cases, to season the land. In limited quantities, salt acts as a fertilizer. Therefore, salt has the idea of enhancing or bringing life to what ever it blends with.

When Jesus tells his disciples they are salt of the earth, what do you think he means?

When salt is used, you do not necessarily see it, but evidence of its presence becomes quickly apparent. Either the soil produces more life or the food tastes better. The life the disciples were to live was to be in contrast to that of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law who taught the message but didn’t live out the heart of God. They were to bring a savoring effect to the world, influencing it to reflect the character of God.

In what practical ways might we have a savoring influence in the world around us?

In what ways might we cease being salty?

In Palestine there were various forms of salt. Some salt could actually lose its flavor and effectiveness by breaking down and blending with the dust and sand. This type of salt, though it looks like salt, has none of the desired impact. This would be representative of the Pharisees who had an appearance of righteousness, but no godly impact in the world.

Christ was essentially saying to not be this “type” of salt. We become un-salty when we blend with the world to the extent that our distinctiveness is gone. If we embrace a life of sin, then there is no righteousness that we bring to the world to help make it more Christ-like. If our lives look no different from our co-workers, who do not know God, then what do we have to contribute? What does that say about us?

Colossians 4:6 (NIV)

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

What does it mean to season your conversation with salt?

As salt makes food more appealing, we are to talk in a way to people that reflects tact and love. We will be more effective in talking to people if grace influences our manner, tone and choice of words. Our goal is not to condemn others for how they fail to meet expectations, but to lovingly point them to Christ.

What are some practical ways you could have a savoring influence within the circles God has placed you that might reflect the love of God?

Influence 2

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 (NIV)

¹⁸ *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:*

¹⁹ *that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.* ²⁰ *We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

Ephesians 6:19-20 (NIV)

¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Influence: AMBASSADOR

How would you define the role of an ambassador?

"A diplomatic official of the highest rank, sent by one sovereign or state to another as its resident representative." <http://dictionary.reference.com>

The role of an ambassador is to represent the voice and will of the ruler of his/her home country.

According to these verses, what is the message that we are to represent to this world?

Do you think the people within your circles of influence see you as an ambassador for Jesus? Why or why not? How could you represent his message of reconciliation to them?

If you truly understood your role as an ambassador, how that might affect your life?

Influence 3**Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)**

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Colossians 3:9-10 (NIV)

⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Influence: IMAGE

What does it mean to image God in this world?

We image God when we represent his character and rule to the rest of creation.

What are some characteristics of God that we are to represent?

In what practical ways might you represent God's character this coming week in your circles of influence?

What does it mean to represent God's rule in this world?

The first place we need to represent God's rule is in our own lives. We are to model complete submission to the Father and seek his will versus our own. Jesus expressed this in the garden when he said, "not my will, but yours be done." As people watch how we relate to God and how he works through us, they will understand more about who God is as King.

As well, Jesus expressed God's authority wherever he went. Everything he did was to counter the effects of the fall. He preached obedience to the King, he healed disease, he raised the dead and he exercised authority over the evil spiritual realm. Jesus then told his disciples that they would do the same things (and greater things) as they placed faith in him and were restored to image. As we go through this world we are to exercise God's power and authority and counter the effects of the fall as we bring people to Christ.

John 14:12 (NIV)

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NIV)

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

How might you exercise God's rule within your circles of influence?

This might include praying for healing for people, dealing with spiritual warfare or allowing God to do the impossible through your faith, etc. This is a trickier concept to grasp, but it is one we deeply need to consider if we are going to image God as Adam was commanded to.

Influence 4**Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)**

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Acts 13:46-48 (NIV)

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

Ephesians 5:8 (NIV)

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

Influence: **LIGHT**

Light, as a symbol, has two main connotations in scripture:

1. It refers to the glory of God
2. It is truth that reveals what is hidden in the darkness

How might we radiate the glory of God?

Have others ever mentioned they saw something different in you? What do you think it was that they were seeing?

Psalms 96:3 (NIV)

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.

How might we help people see the glory of God?

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV)

³ *This is good, and pleases God our Savior,* ⁴ *who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

How can we help push away darkness and reveal truth for people?

Have you had opportunities in the past to help clarify some misunderstanding about God or faith? Share your story.

How might you be able to lovingly bring truth about God into your circles of influence?

This week, intentionally try to have impact in one of these areas.