

STRAIGHT TALK: It's Time to Shine

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Have you ever heard someone say, “There’s just something about them”? This usually means they see something they admire in a person; they stand out from the crowd, but they can’t quite put their finger on what it is.

I like when I hear it said about someone who’s a Christian. Because when we are good to people and God’s love flows through us, there is something that just draws people’s attention.

The Bible says that Christians are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). On the job, in the grocery store, and even among friends and family members who don’t have a relationship with Christ, God’s people are there to bring seasoning to an unsavory situation.

There is so much turmoil in people’s lives today—so much darkness—and they’re looking for hope. As Christians, we are the ones who can help them find what they need through a relationship with God.

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus says, “But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything...” (NIV). It seems that somewhere along the way, the lines between godliness and ungodliness have gotten blurred. Things that would have been considered wrong 20 or 30 years ago seem to be “not so bad” today. I wonder what the next 20 years will bring if this continues.

We may need to ask ourselves: What are we showing the world? What is it that keeps us “salty”? How do we, as Christians, keep our lights shining in the darkness around us? What sets us apart?

I believe the answer is *holiness*. And when I say holiness, I don't mean religion. I'm not talking about a list of dos and don'ts...or going to church on Sunday mornings just to do your Christian duty one day a week. Yes, going to church is a great thing! But living a holy life is about so much more than attending a service once a week.

When I say holiness, I'm talking about behavior that is borne out of a personal, intimate relationship with God. I'm referring to something that helps us love other people and be good to them.

Holiness is the “something” the world needs to see in us. There are so many people who may never attend a church service or read a Bible, but they *are* reading us! They are watching our behavior and looking to us to find out what God is like. We are God's ambassadors, and we are meant to be light in the darkness so they can find their way to Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Hebrews 12:14 tells us to pursue holiness. Holiness is the outcome of a work that God does in each of us through our personal relationship with Him. It begins the moment we accept Jesus as our Savior and we are made holy at that moment. And then little by little, He changes us from the inside out so we become more and more like Him. Throughout this process, God slowly strips away our pride and selfishness. We become less focused on how we can please ourselves and become more concerned with blessing other people. We go from, “What about me?” to “How may I help you?”

Now, it's important to remember that we can't change ourselves—only God can change us and help us to become more

like Him. In John 15:5 (NIV), Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

So, what is our part? Our part is to regularly take some time to develop our relationship with God. We do this by reading His Word and talking to Him in prayer. Just like a best friend, the Lord desires for us to talk to Him throughout the day about anything and everything.

I like to say that holiness is an "inside job." As we spend time with God and ask Him to change us, He slowly but surely transforms us from the inside out.

Don't worry if you feel like you haven't "arrived." The fact that you desire to be a better person means you are making progress. God doesn't promise us that the process will be fast or easy, but He does assure us that He will make us more like Him as we continue to seek Him.

Wherever we are in our process of growing in holiness, it's important to remember the world is watching. And every day, in every situation, we have the privilege of being salt and light to the people all around us...and showing them what God is really like.

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