

Equipped to be like salt

If you were asked to describe yourself in one word, what word would you choose? I doubt very much if “salt” would come to mind. However, this is one way that Jesus describes his followers.¹ As Christians, what do we have in common with salt? Here are a few suggestions.

Salt preserves. Before fridges and freezers became widely available, salt was used to preserve food, particularly meat and fish. Placing these foods in direct contact with salt lengthened their shelf-life by slowing down the rate of natural decay. To what extent do we Christians act as preservatives in society by allowing the purity of our lives to rub off on others? This can happen only if we pay sufficient attention to the quality of the way we live. If we lose our saltiness, then we forfeit any preserving influence we might have had.

Salt irritates. Have you ever had the experience of salt going into a cut in your finger? It really nips! Sometimes I haven't been aware of having a cut at all until I've spilt salt on it. Although it causes irritation, the salt in this case can act as a warning, telling me that something is wrong with my finger. When we act as salt to those around us, this can cause irritation too - not because we're deliberately trying to be annoying, but if our lives are in line with biblical principles, this might upset people if it exposes some sinful practices in their lives which they perhaps haven't been aware of.

Salt makes people feel thirsty. Eating a bag of salted peanuts always makes me so thirsty for a drink of water. I wonder if we live our lives in such a way that those around us are thirsty to know more about the Lord whom we serve. Does our conversation create such a thirst in people that they want to drink in what we say about Jesus Christ?

Salt adds flavour. Food tastes so bland without salt, right? Even a small amount of salt can completely change the flavour of what we eat. However, too much salt can ruin food. One bible verse says this: *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everybody”*². Notice the relative proportions here - *full of grace* and *seasoned with salt*; not full of salt and seasoned with grace which, rather than adding flavour, is more likely to be unpalatable and a complete turn-off to those around us.

Salt softens “hard” water. Many parts of Britain, and other parts of the world, have “hard” water. This means that the water contains a high proportion of certain minerals which makes it difficult for detergents to produce a soapy lather. If these minerals are replaced with salt, much “softer” water is produced. Do we have soft hearts of compassion for those around us? Does our “saltiness” have a softening effect on those whose hearts are hard?

Salt melts ice. One of the problems with living in Scotland is that we get our fair share of snow in the winter. We're always relieved to see the salt lorry out on the roads when the weather gets bad. Salt is most effective at melting snow when temperatures are close to freezing. Do you come into contact with people who are icy in their attitude toward what you believe? Even the iciest heart can be melted by coming into contact with salt - in other words, with YOU.

To be effective and act as salt in our world, we need to connect with other people and intentionally demonstrate the presence and power of Jesus in our lives. Let's not keep our saltiness to ourselves, but get into the habit of lovingly sprinkling it on others!

¹ Matthew 5:13

² Colossians 4:6 (NIV)