

Session 4 Showing Up

How did the movement of Jesus followers spread so quickly and widely in the first few centuries after his death and resurrection? How did that happen?

It didn't happen because the Jesus followers decided to be "Christians." It happened because they took Jesus' words seriously. And, over time, they changed the world.

In the gospel of Matthew, we can read the message that got it all going. This was the beginning of the movement, and it happened early in Jesus' ministry. He was laying the foundation of the movement. It was the beginning of the change. It was a revolutionary world-change message.

And three hundred years later, the message of Jesus was everywhere. Nobody was worshiping Jupiter anymore. So, what about us? Why would we settle for "Christian"- something we can't even define-when Jesus gives us such specific instructions?

Discussion Starter

In your own community, how have you seen the followers of Jesus as preserving and positive influences? What are some of the significant good deeds that attracted other people, giving them more reason to think highly of God and of what he is doing in your community.

Video Overview For session 4 of the DVD

In the opening verses of the message Jesus began in Matthew 5. He described his followers as poor, sad, meek, righteous, merciful, pure, peaceful, persecuted, insulted people, waiting for a reward in heaven. His listeners that day must have wondered, is that really who we are?

Jesus then gave his disciples two word pictures. He called them "the salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." That's who you are, he was telling them. Salt is a preservative. Jesus was saying, "You're the world's preservative. Without you, everything rots, and culture stinks." Jesus also called his followers "the light of the world," like a town or city placed on a hilltop, visible all around, day or night. He was saying, You've been strategically placed to have a shining influence. And Jesus said "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deed and glorify your Father in heaven. (5:16)

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Jesus wants us to live in such a way that when people see our good actions, they don't say, "What a nice person," but instead recognize something so extraordinary that they begin to connect the dots and give the credit to God.

Be salt. Be light. Let your lifestyle point the way to Jesus. Think about your own story. The only reason you're a Christian is that others were salt and light in your life, even if they didn't know it. Salt always preserves: light always shows the way. Salt works even when you can't see it working, and light illumines even when you aren't thinking about it.

No matter where you are in your daily life, Jesus has you there as the salt and light of that world.

So let's not settle for "Christians." Let's ask God how to make us more effective salt and more effective light.

And as God answers that prayer, who knows what he might do in our families, in our communities, in our nation, and in the whole world?