

SALT AND LIGHT REVISITED

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Thirty years ago this summer, Bob and I gave a talk together on “Salt and Light,” and I just recently came across our talking points. Trying to remember who we were half a lifetime ago, brand-new parents for the first time, I looked to see what we had thought was important enough to share with others. Addressing a rally on behalf of the Equal Rights Amendment, we naturally supported the call for equality, but we warned against “seeking equality in order to further self-aggrandizement and to compete for material wealth, success and power, stressing the rights of self over responsibilities to others. Christ calls us to a self-sacrificing love that will first seek to fully develop the best in others...As salt and light, we must not conform to society, but engage it...The impact of Christians on the world **depends** on being **distinct**, not identical.” I hear an echo in these words of the St. Olaf ethic of service.

Thirty years later, we both are involved in ministry after decades in government or in business consulting. Bob now has spent ten years developing Great Dads, giving seminars to men to help turn their hearts to their children. I have been advising ministries and foundations involved in sharing Christ and serving people in China, and currently am editing a collection of life stories of Chinese Christians, *Salt and Light: Lives that Shaped Modern China*. We feel blessed that our three children, now in their twenties, also carry on this ethic as they have begun their working lives in areas of non-profit service -- to recovering substance-abusers, to the homeless, to internationals and refugees.

And yet during these past three decades, we have found that becoming salt to preserve societies (both ours and others in this global era) from moral decay, and light to show the pathway to personal righteousness and social justice, is no simple matter. How many times and how many ways have we been less than salty and done less than light the way? Are we really being **in** the world but not **of** the world?

Going back to the basics in Mathew 5:13-16, we are reminded that Jesus doesn't tell us we **should** be salt and light, but that we **are** the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Only when the Spirit of Jesus is alive in our inmost being do we add zest and light to life just by being our **real selves**, every day in every way. Sanctification takes a lifetime.

This matter of being, not doing is something very difficult for workaholic boomers steeped in the "outcomes"-based values of strategic planning. Last weekend, I read again Andrew Murray's century-old classic *The Ministry of Intercession*, which convinces us that praying is our most important and effective action, to stay emptied of self and filled with Christ, thus gaining direction and power from the Spirit far beyond our own abilities to partner with God in exercising authority over all of earth and heaven.

"Out of His glorious riches, may the Father strengthen you with power through His spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

Eph. 3:16