

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MATTHEW 5:13-20,43-48

1. When Jesus calls us the “salt of the earth,” what does it look like for Christians to lose their “saltiness”?

Salt only works when it stays distinct. Christians lose their saltiness when faith becomes more about fitting in than being faithful. That can look like softening hard truths, avoiding uncomfortable obedience, or letting culture shape our values more than Jesus does. We don’t stop believing — we just stop influencing. Jesus’ warning is serious: a faith that blends in completely doesn’t actually help anyone.

2. Jesus says light is meant to be seen. What are some subtle ways we hide our light today?

We often hide our light by staying quiet when we know we should speak, by separating faith from everyday life, or by avoiding actions that might cost us something socially or professionally. Hiding doesn’t always mean denying Jesus — sometimes it just means keeping Him out of certain areas of life. Jesus assumes real discipleship naturally shows up; hiding it takes effort.

3. How do we live out good works without turning them into a way to look spiritual or earn approval?

It starts with checking our motives. Jesus doesn’t say “don’t let anyone see,” but “let them see so God gets the credit.” When good works flow from gratitude instead of guilt or ego, they tend to feel more natural and less performative. The goal isn’t attention, but reflection — letting people catch a glimpse of God’s goodness through ordinary obedience.

4. What does Jesus mean when He says He came to fulfill the Law, not get rid of it — and why is that important for us?

Jesus is saying the Law wasn’t the problem — it just couldn’t change hearts on its own. He fulfills it by living it perfectly and by showing its deeper purpose: love for God and others. That matters because our faith isn’t about keeping rules to earn God’s favor; it’s about responding to the grace already given through Christ.

5. Why do you think Jesus ties together how Scripture is taught and how it’s actually lived out (5:19)?

Because people learn as much from our lives as from our words. When teaching and living don’t line up, faith starts to feel hollow or confusing. Jesus seems to be warning that minimizing obedience — even subtly — shapes shallow disciples. Real faith is formed when belief, teaching, and daily life all point in the same direction.

6. Jesus says our righteousness has to go beyond the scribes and Pharisees. What does that look like in real life?

The Pharisees were great at outward obedience, but Jesus calls for something deeper — a heart that actually wants what God wants. Going “beyond” means honesty about motives, humility

instead of comparison, and obedience even when no one is watching. It's less about appearing righteous and more about becoming transformed.

7. Why is loving enemies so difficult — and why does Jesus make it central to following Him?

Loving enemies feels unfair and unsafe because it goes against our instincts. We want boundaries, justice, and control. But Jesus points to God's example — grace given to everyone, even those who reject Him. Enemy-love shows that our lives are shaped by God's mercy, not by resentment or fear.

8. What do you think Jesus means by “be perfect,” and how can we live that out without falling into guilt or burnout?

Jesus isn't demanding flawless behavior. He's calling for wholeness — a life that isn't divided between loving God and protecting ourselves. Especially in how we love others. Perfection here is about maturity and direction, not arrival. We keep moving toward Christlike love, trusting grace to meet us along the way.