

How have you kind of just been able to have influence in the lives of people around you, whether that is at school or work or other places that you may be? I just think the Lord has just been so gracious and been able to bless me in every season that I have been in. A phrase that recently came to mind is "bloom where you're planted." Being present where you are and allowing the Lord and the Holy Spirit just to work through that, and you won't realize the impacts that you're having. Sometimes you'll never know. I am a nursing student.

I'm going into my senior year, and I work at a hospital that— in my, my unit is a transplant unit. And just through work, I got to be there this summer the whole time, so it's just been really fun to get to share the gospel with a few patients and even just meet them in some of their lowest moments. And it's just the opportunity to just be a light to them. Not even speaking the name of Jesus, just the impression you can have, the gentle touch, the way you can look someone in the eye and show that you care for them. Yeah.

I think that's also been so special to just be able to do that with patients, to hug them, to show them that they are loved. Even when they see their identity as their illness, as their injury, it's the chance to point them back to their identity is in Christ, that He loves them. I love just the message that you're sharing also about allowing Christ to work through you actually is such a blessing to you too.

Good morning. Hey, I wanna revisit a song we just sang, a new song this morning, and I just wanted to start this way. We sang the phrase, "Holy Spirit, have your way." Then we also said, "I don't wanna leave the same." That's kinda scary. Is that really what I mean when I'm singing? I'm kind of into truth in advertisements.

If I'm singing something, do I really mean I don't wanna leave the same? Am I really saying, "Holy Spirit, have your way," or please, Work around my issues and do what you wanna do, but don't mess up my life. So I'm just saying, when we come to church, ultimately we wanna come because we wanna experience God. We wanna experience the Holy Spirit. So I just, like I said, when I sing words like that, I always think, do I mean this or am I just singing this because that's what we're supposed to be singing?

So Holy Spirit, have your way with us this morning, right? Amen. Hey, the word for the day is influence.

Series we started last week is Christ's influence in me. Last week Shawn talked about that. This week is through me. Next week is around me. But I always get curious about words, so I thought I'd do a little study on the history of the word influence.

This is the start of school. We're gonna make it a multiple choice

quiz, so here we go. Question number 1, the word influence comes from a 14th century Latin word used to describe the effect the weather has on our behavior, the effect that stars have on behavior, the effect that caffeine has on behavior, or the effect that IU football would someday have on human behavior in the new world? All right, influence. The correct answer is— the answer, yeah.

The answer is actually— if you go back, go back, go back. The answer is B. In the ancient world, in the 14th century, they believed if somebody was misbehaving, it was some kind of invisible fluid flowing down from the stars. I would love that. The reason the kitchen's messy, honey, is because the stars have changed and I can't behave right, right?

No, but they thought the influence was this invisible world change on behavior, and that's the same where we got the word influenza, invisible world, right? So that's where it came from. Next question. The phrase sphere of influence first appeared in the 1800s, 1880s concerning European geopolitical diplomacy, American economic reach, high school geometry class, or the invention of basketball, which is an orange sphere, all right? Correct answer is, this one you might know, it's A.

It was the European nations would divide up parts of Africa. They didn't colonize them, but we have a sphere of influence there. We wanna influence them. Of course, it was more like manipulation and colonization, but. Next one.

What year did the phrase under the influence, referring to alcohol, first appear in print in the US? And it was not 2016, I promise you, right? Answer on that one is 1862. New York Times published about a US, a military person falling into a river and drowning because they were under the influence, and then that version it said liquor, of liquor. So we know what influence means.

Next question. What year was the first time the New York Times used the term influencer referring to a social media marketing? That one's probably, we can guess, E, that's a good answer, whoever that was, thank you. Next question. According to Google, what's the best way to describe a social media influencer to someone over the age of 60?

All right, I'm over 60, yes, I showed this slide in the 8 o'clock service, right? A, a modern-day TV commercial spokesperson who hosts their own continuous talk show. B, a modern-day walking billboard who gets paid to talk to invisible friends on a tiny telephone screen. C, both the above might hopefully help. D, someone over 60 doesn't really care anyway.

All right? The answer, the answer I'm gonna see, it's both of them. Now, let's give, I'm over 60, so I'm, but let's give the 8 o'clock

version and maybe some of you over credit. They know how to dial a phone, right? They know how to write a check.

They know how to talk on the phone without walking away 'cause there's a cord on it, right? So they can do things that maybe some of us can't do. So we're not gonna throw him under the bus. Next one, last one, in a tweet, this is true, January 2019, it was during this youth, huge Catholic youth festival in Panama, 700,000 people, Pope Francis called the first influencer, who did he call the first influencer? Cristiano Ronaldo, Kendall Jenner, Meghan Markle, James Charles, and E, hopefully the correct answer, which it is, Virgin Mary.

He said she was the first, let me get the exact tweet right. With her yes, Mary became the most influential woman in history. Without social networks, she became the first influencer. She was an influencer for God, right? So we're talking about influence this morning and we're talking specifically about the influence Jesus wants to have through you.

Into the lives of others. Not manipulation, influence is really you have an effect on somebody but it's not control, it's not power, it's influence. It's invisible world. It's like the flowing, like they used to believe that invisible liquid would flow from the stars. But it's this flowing Holy Spirit through us into the lives of other people.

So the passage today we're look, actually, the passage we're looking at is from Matthew chapter 5 and If you're here and you're elementary, 'cause we don't have the kids ministry today, there's some handouts out in the back. I just put it on the screen there. We have these two handouts. If you're over elementary age and you just want something simple to take notes, you can go get one too, that's okay. But I'm just telling you, if you're here and you're taking notes for kids, the scripture passage is Matthew 5:13-16, and the main idea is Jesus wants to influence my friends through me.

So. If you're under 6th grade. If you're over 6th grade, you might take note of that as well 'cause it might be helpful, so. So the passage today is Matthew chapter 5. It was read earlier.

And before I read it again, we're gonna read it again together. I wanted to get the context here because Matthew chapter 5, around it, before it and after it is most of what we call the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes. It's Jesus teaching What does it mean to live in the way of Jesus? How do we become those kind of people who live in the lives of forgiveness and good and all those things? So in the context of that, he's saying this, but just keep in mind the context is this bigger sense of this is what it means to live life in the kingdom of God, all right?

So Matthew chapter 5, read this with me out loud. There's 3 slides.

First, here we go. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?

It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. Next one. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.

Instead, they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." So in the context of Jesus telling us how we can live a life to become a certain kind of people with the Holy Spirit in us, he's saying, "Now this is how you are the salt of the earth. You're the influential people in the earth." Right? First thing we're gonna say is this, you can be distinctive. Jesus says, "You're the salt of the earth." In the ancient world, salt was really, really, really important.

It wasn't just something at the kitchen table. They used it to preserve food. Didn't have refrigeration. It was often used for health reasons. It was often used to help the soil become more healthy for things.

So salt was really important. Actually, sometimes people would get paid in salt. The word salary actually comes from the same word salt. It was that valuable of a commodity. But it was valuable because it made a difference.

It preserved things. It made things taste different, made things taste distinctive. All right, that's the key word, distinctive. Now, if anybody's a chemistry person, they'll know that salt, sodium chloride, NaCl, real pure salt never loses its saltiness. Ancient world though, they would have to get salt from the sea or from the ground and would always be corrupted with sand and other things.

So then, 'cause the question I asked when I read this passage was, how does salt lose its saltiness? Well, over time, and especially if it was exposed to moisture, humidity, or water, the salt would totally lose its tang and become bland, tasteless. The word actually in the original language is the same word we get the word moron, it's moronic, it's no good. It's bad. So when Jesus was saying this, they knew what it was like for salt to lose its saltiness.

They knew what it looked like to be distinctive, and how do we lose our distinction? How do we— so the question is then, okay, how are we supposed to be distinctive as followers of Jesus? What's our distinction? How do we stand out?

I grew up in a church where our distinctives were primarily external behaviors.

I never wore jeans to church. That was distinctive. We didn't drink. We didn't play cards, didn't go to movies 'cause that's what made us look like followers of Jesus. Furthermore, your hair could not be over your ears or over your collar if you were a guy.

I have no problem with that now, right? So it was like this, and there was a lot of good things about that church growing up, but it seemed like being salt, being distinctive was more about how I look and how I stand out in those kind of ways. So much so that one time in high school cafeteria, we were talking about something about church or whatever, and the girl across the table from me said, "Oh, "you go to that church that doesn't let you do anything." Is that the distinction we want? And it's stuck with me. I don't wanna be distinguished by I can't do those things.

That sounds like a real exciting life, right? Or you have the Amish, they don't use indoor plumbing, they don't have heat or air conditioning, you know, it's like, is that what you, so distinction is different. The Pharisees were really good at doing this external distinction. They looked better, they dressed differently, they prayed to get people's attention, but when Jesus says we're the salt of the earth, I don't think he meant our hair is above our collars if we're men, and I don't think he meant we don't play with playing cards 'cause that's worldly. I'm quite sure he didn't mean that.

And again, if you look at the context of his teaching, The saltiness he was talking about is the unique things that were part of our character because of the Holy Spirit in us, right?

So the ways to be distinctive according to some church cultures is what I just said, but the way to be distinctive according to Jesus is things like you forgive people. You forgive people. In radical ways. Doesn't mean you let them walk over you, but you offer forgiveness when they don't deserve it. You offer mercy to somebody when they don't deserve it.

You love your enemies. You pray for those who hate you. Jesus said that just right after this passage. So this, the distinction is more this internal distinction of they forgive people, not, not throwing away hurt, not that, but just they offer forgiveness, they show mercy, They are kind. That's one of the fruit of the Spirit.

They're kind, not nice, kind.

One of our distinctives is we are sexually countercultural, sexually pure before marriage, faithful in heterosexual marriage. That's huge. That was a huge thing even in that day. We're different in that way. And it's not simply behavior.

It's because there's something inside of us that drives us to understand we wanna walk in the way of Jesus. If we're distinctive, we let our yes be yes and our no be no. I have a brother in the business world and he said one of the big key distinctions of Christians was they had integrity. They had verbal integrity. If they said something, it was true.

If they didn't, it wasn't. So just having integrity in your speech and not trying to nuance the language so it's a little deceptive, but it's like, no, I'm gonna tell you what's true. I'm not gonna shade the truth. But that's distinctive. Christians, we are distinctive because we're unusually generous.

Most of the missionary hospitals around the world or hospitals in third world countries were started by people who had the spirit of Jesus in them during different plague outbreaks throughout history, throughout— I'm not talking about 2020 and I'm not gonna call COVID a plague, but the big plagues when people were dying Everybody would leave the city. Christians would stay there to take care of the dead and dying knowing that it was signing their own death warrant. That was unique. People were like, "Why are you doing that?" That was distinctive. That was salty.

So when Jesus says you're supposed to be salt, he's asking you to be distinctive. He's telling us you can be, and my question for each one of us is, is there some way where Jesus might be asking you, to be distinctive even this week, maybe in a relationship where there's some forgiveness needed, maybe in a relationship where you need to show somebody mercy 'cause they've hurt you. And again, I'm not saying deny the hurt, I'm saying you show them mercy. Or maybe you show them love when they don't deserve it. Maybe it's a family member, somebody you work with, neighbor.

But the distinction of Christianity is the supernatural ability to offer mercy, forgiveness, generosity, kindness when someone doesn't deserve it. And you can only do that with the Spirit of Jesus in you. So maybe that's the kind of salt that Jesus is asking you to be this week because it's hard. If it's easy for you, it may not be the salt of the Holy Spirit in you, right? We're to be noticeably distinctive.

Second thing though, he says we can be the light of the world. So I'm gonna say it this way, you can shine bright. You're the light of the world. So what's light for? Light is to give clarity to things.

I have a reading lamp at home. I mean, I'm over 60, I have reading glasses. And the light recently has been driving me crazy 'cause it'll flash on and off right in the middle of reading. Unplug it and plug it. I've hit the lamp a few times, not that it responds to pain, but I'm just like, I need the light so I can see things clearly.

I was in a hotel this week. My wife and I were out of town for something. When I get up in a hotel and I don't know where the bathroom is, I'm not used to it, what do I do? I turn the light on my phone 'cause I don't wanna trip over the desk chair 'cause I wanna see things clearly. Light helps us see things clearly.

And if you're a light on a hill, like Jesus says, if we're lights, we're hoping people can see the realities of life and of God clearly and see what joy and peace can actually look like. Not in a fake way, but in a real way, 'cause that's what the world wants. People want us, they want joy in their life, they want peace. Deep peace and joy. And the light we show them, if we live it out that way, helps them see clearly that maybe the way of Jesus is the way of hope and light.

So Jesus said, "I'm the light of the world," but then he turns around and tells us we are. That's a pretty important task he's delegated to us. Because again, he said, "I'm the light of the world," in a huge way. He's the one who lets us see all realities about God, but then he's saying to each one of you, you're the light of the world. And in your relationships with your family, your neighbors, your friends, your enemies, your coworkers, people can see clearly the life of Jesus lived through you.

So let me explain what that can look like practically speaking. So in Philippians 2, Paul is writing to the Philippian church and he's telling them, and I'll tell you what he says at the end of this long paragraph. He says at the end, then you can be then you can shine like stars in the universe. Then you can shine. Well, if there's a then, there must be an if, right?

But if the conclusion is you can shine, well, what goes before that? In order to be somebody who shines, he says, first of all, be like Jesus, consider the interests of others above that of your own. Easier said than done, right? There's a situation I've been pondering in my own life recently where I think Jesus is telling me, consider their interests above your own. I have my arguments with Jesus, I don't want to, he says do it anyway.

I thought, okay, I will, you know. But consider the interests above that of your own, that's how you shine. Then he says, be humble. Paul says this in Philippians 2 before that, be humble. Don't think too highly of yourself.

That's how we shine. Not in a way that's degrading to ourselves. It's genuine, life-giving humility. But then right before this part where he says, "Then you can shine," something very practical. He says, "Do everything without complaining or arguing.

Then you can shine." So wait a minute, so you're saying, Paul, you're saying, Jesus, that excessive complaining and grumbling Kinda dims my

light to point to Jesus? Well, yes it does. So I don't know, maybe it's you, maybe it's me, maybe I need to check my grumbling and complaining. 'Cause again, Paul's not saying, he's not talking about, Jesus isn't talking about it's all about how you look and whether you look clean in your life and your lawn's clean. He's saying no.

Do you look to the interest of others before your own? Do you serve others? Do you stop? Are you a grumbler and a complainer? Though, if you, if you live in a way where you don't grumble and don't complain and this, and you serve others and you look at their interests, that's what makes you shine.

It's not whether you have nice clothes on. It's not even whether you come to church every Sunday. You can come to church every Sunday, and if you're a grumbler and a complainer, you're not shining. I don't care how many times you come to church. In this building during a week.

You're not. That's what Jesus always told the Pharisees. You look good, but your heart's bad. So maybe, maybe there's something that Jesus is telling you. After the first service, somebody told me they were wrestling with God want— they think Jesus wants them to consider the interests of someone else over their own interests in a situation where they've been hurt.

And it's not, again, not denying the hurt. It's not like being a doormat, 'cause we tell Jesus our hurt. But maybe we then say, "Okay, we'll do it your way. Even though I have really good arguments for my way, we'll do it your way." Maybe that's the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit that makes us shine like a light on a hill, or as Paul says, shine like stars in the universe. So maybe there's something like that going on in your life because again, being a salt of the earth and light of the world is inside out through you.

It's not by how you dress. It's not by what you do and don't do primarily about movies or whatever. Last thing though in the passage, Paul says, "You can glorify your Father in heaven if you do this. If you're living in a way that's salty and full of light," which means your character's being transformed by the Holy Spirit supernaturally, he says, "You can," glorify your Father in heaven, and I'm gonna use the word spotlight God and I'll tell you why in a second. So the word glorify is one of those religiosity words that we sometimes use and we don't really know what it means.

Maybe that's not you but that's me sometimes. So there was years ago when I was in my early preaching days I was going over a sermon with my wife Kathy and I said, so my conclusion's gonna be so we should glorify God. She was like, "What does that mean?" I was like, "Well, glorify God. Don't you know that church, we talk about that at church, glorifying God." She's like, "What does that mean? What does that?"

And I said, "Well, it's what we say.

We say we glorify God." Then she said, "What does that look like?" I said, "I don't really know." But then I, so I thought about that a lot over the years. And I always tell people my best training for preaching has been being married to my wife 'cause she asks me questions like that in life. She's not satisfied with pat answers. Neither should any of us. So I look, you know, the word glorify has a root, at the root of the word it's a word that means give weight to.

It's weighty. You know, give glory to old IU, right? But it's weighty. So if I give glory to God, I'm giving weight to God. And in a sense, I'm having a huge part in making sure the spotlight shines brightly on God and he has center stage.

It's not me, but glorifying God means I'm putting the spotlight on the goodness of God, the love of God, the mercy of God. God is all he says he is. But it's giving God center stage, main spotlight. So if I live that way, I start making, God look really good and the way of Jesus look really desirable because he's spotlighted. Not me.

I'm not trying to show that I'm a moral person, I'm a good person and I live a good life, hope to go to heaven. It's not that. It's I'm living in such a way where people start being intrigued like, how do you do that? Why do you do that? You see, because people watch you more than you think.

You're on display. My first, right out of college, I taught junior high and high school for 3 years. That's where all my gray hair came from, junior high kids. Sorry if you're in junior high. But I remember, and I was a coach, so I hung out with the coaches after school or different events, and of course coaches do what coaches do.

I'm stereotyping. There was a lot of certain behavior and conversation that was not me, right?

And one of the coaches came to me after a few months and he's like, "We're watching you." I was like, "You're watching me?" "Yeah, we know you're different. We're watching you." And he actually said, "I wanna be like you someday." I said, "What do you mean?" "You don't care what people think, do you?" I said, "Not really." But I'm saying that because whoever you work with, whoever you're around, they're watching you. If they know, if you've proclaimed you're a follower of Jesus, They will never tell you this. They would never admit it, but they are watching you. And they're not watching you to see whether your hair's cut correctly or you play cards or go to movies.

They're watching to see how you treat people, how you handle difficult situations. Are you someone who exudes with mercy and kindness and forgiveness? Or are you just like the rest of us and you're just

vengeful and hurtful, but you go to church on Sundays? They wanna see this. They wanna see this.

They wanna, and they know you're different. You've said you are, they know you are. They're looking for love, joy, and peace. They're looking for kindness. They're looking for mercy.

They're looking for generosity. They're not looking to see how you dress and what church you go to. They're looking at you. You're the gospel. You're the gospel for them.

So we're on display, but I also wrote down, and so therefore Jesus is on display in your life. The way of Jesus is either appealing or not appealing when somebody looks at your life. And that's scary, and there's times even this last week, there's some things that I feel like God's told me, I want you to take the Jesus way on this one. And not force your point of view. I mean, it's not like denial, it's just like, no, I'm gonna take the Jesus way.

And it takes supernatural, like when Stephen had to forgive those who were stoning him, he had to have the Holy Spirit saying, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing. All right, so it's a supernatural thing. And in 1 Peter, Peter even writes this, live, he wrote this to people, you know, couple thousand years ago, but I'm assuming he also wrote to us 'cause the Holy Spirit knows that. I'm saying this to us. Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

We want them to see God in the spotlight. We want them to see Jesus in the spotlight. Not us, not our church, not our religiosity. We want them to see Jesus. But it becomes supernatural because those things in us have to— something that the Holy Spirit does in us.

So we have application, practical challenge. You do two things. You can try harder to be a better Christian and be forgiving, or you can do what we sang earlier, let the Holy Spirit have his way in you. If you try harder to be a good person, I guarantee you, like the Pharisees, you fail. But if you take the active step of telling the Holy Spirit, have your way with me, will you expose something?

If there's something in me that I need to be treating this person with more kindness or more with the generosity of Jesus, then show me that. I wanna be that way. And I guarantee you, if you invite that of the Holy Spirit, he will show you. And if you really say, "I don't wanna leave this place different," or, "I don't wanna leave this next week different, I wanna be different," well, it's because you have to invite the Holy Spirit and he may nose around in closets of your heart that you don't want him to nose around in, but you'll be so glad that he did. And maybe there's a situation, a relationship where he's

saying, "Yes, this is where I want you to be salt and light in the supernatural way of Jesus.

I want you to be kind to this person, they don't deserve it." I want you to forgive them. I know they've hurt you. I want you to be merciful to them. I know they don't deserve it. And it's not— again, it's not denying your emotions of pain.

Jesus knows all those emotions. He's been betrayed and hurt and abandoned. I'm saying that because he's asking you and me to show that towards someone else. And maybe that's what we do. Holy Spirit, I wrote these words down when we were singing them.

Holy Spirit, have your way. Do what you want to.

We don't wanna leave the same. I mean, are we being honest when we sing that? Am I being honest when I say that? Holy Spirit, I wanna be different. I don't wanna be like everybody else, vengeful and petty and hurtful and pushing for my own rights.

I want to live in the way of Jesus, not a doormat, but powerfully bold and humble, letting the Holy Spirit show Jesus through my life to my wife, my kids, my neighbors, my friends, my enemies, coworkers. That's what I want. And I think that's what most of you want. And I think that's most what most of us can all, we can all pray for that and ask for that. And the Holy Spirit will, he will show you.

I promise you, he will show you the next steps to take so you can become saltier. And I'll invent a word, lightier, right? Lighter, brighter.

Let's pray.

So we, we, we sang the prayer. Now we'll pray the prayer. Uh, Holy Spirit, have your way.

And maybe right now in your, in the In the pictures of your mind, maybe the Holy Spirit will bring the picture of a person or a situation up in your mind. Or maybe there's some hurtful emotions and pain. And maybe the Holy Spirit's telling you, "I want you to be salt and light in this situation in a way that's gonna feel unnatural to you because it is." 'Cause you need the supernatural power of Jesus to live that way. It's strong. It's powerful, but it's kind and merciful.

So if there's a face that's come up, maybe that's the Holy Spirit telling you this is the person, this is the situation.

So God, I'm gonna pray right now for each one of us that if there's some situation that's come to mind right now or some situation that will come to mind maybe in the spur of the moment on Tuesday afternoon

at 3:30, who knows, where we have a sense of, oh, This is the time the Holy Spirit wants me to show mercy to this person. This is the time where I need to be kind to someone who hasn't earned that from me. We wanna be those kind of people. We wanna be spontaneous, obedient people, 'cause we know that brings us to joy and fullness of life. That's what we wanna do.

So we love you, Jesus, and we honor you, Holy Spirit. We ask this all in your name, amen.

So we finish every Sunday with response time, so hopefully even in that prayer time you were responding. But we also take communion as part of our response. Communion, if you're new here, some traditions call it Lord's Supper, some traditions call it Eucharist, but it's honoring what Jesus said the night he was betrayed when he was serving them wine and bread and was kind of a throwback to the Old Testament times when he was basically saying, "Every time you eat this and drink this, remember me. It's for your freedom. It's for your freedom." So when you eat this bread and drink this cup, so when this wafer on the bottom of the thing or the juice comes down your throat, there's nothing magical about the chemicals.

What's mystical is you're saying by that I'm inviting the Spirit of Jesus in me. 'Cause I'm remembering what he said. Be salt, be light. I'm remembering that, I'm inviting that, and if that means I'm gonna treat somebody differently this week or engage with somebody differently in a more life-giving way, that's what I'll do because Jesus tells me to. So he said, "Every time you eat this and drink this, remember me." And that's one of the things I wanna challenge you to remember this week.

Remember he said be salt and light. Now if you're new here, we come up during the last song. We don't dismiss by rows. You just grab one. The bread's on the bottom.

You tear off the bottom, eat the bread. So if you're new, which we don't do it all together, you just take it and go back on your own time. So you know, you can take it up here, you can take it back to your seat. Some of you have been here for years may think, "Oh, it's good to know that. I didn't know that." So, but we do that and then there'll be people on the sides who are the prayer team to pray for you.

If you want prayer, they'll have a lanyard on, orange lanyard. They're here to pray for you, and maybe you just ask them to pray that the Holy Spirit could have your— his way in your life. So, so let's respond to the Holy Spirit.