

AOTALK

WHERE THE
APOSTOLIC COUNCIL
SHARE THEIR HEARTS

DEC
2013



FROM
KEITH'S
HEART TO
YOURS

so, what *Really counts*

Albert Einstein (or William Bruce Cameron), depending on who your source is, made the following far-reaching statement:

Not everything that COUNTS can be COUNTED and not everything that can be COUNTED, COUNTS

These words hovered in my mind as I re-read the challenge Jesus issued in Matthew 5:13-16. It's such a well known sentence, that the English language has even copied it as an idiom and we speak of someone who is genuine, authentic and well known for good as "salt of the earth." Maybe it's this familiarity that causes us to overlook something of the weightiness of the challenge Jesus was presenting and it is worth stopping for a moment

and pondering what He really meant. What counted here?

These few verses teach two simple lessons. Firstly, they emphasise through the metaphors used, salt and light, that there is a **DISTINCTION** between followers of Christ and those who don't follow Him. Salt being applied as a preservative, is not the same as the object it is trying to preserve and light is distinct from the darkness it dispels. This is a very important point to make, especially given the many pressures we face in our society, to conform, be tolerant, be part of the solution and not the problem, not to emphasise our distinctive's etc. These pressures are real and are sometimes more prominent in one culture than in another. Often, the supposedly more progressive and developed nations or societies are more subtle in their

opposition to and persecution of the church, while other countries are open in their denial of religious freedom and intolerant of the right to believe and practice the tenets of the Word of God. So, there is a rightful and necessary place for authentic "apartness" on the part of the church and a time for us not to apologise for that very distinctiveness.

However, the text goes on to emphasise another, equally important dimension, one that is all too often overlooked or underemphasised in our day. Jesus implies that the value of the salt is not in its distinctiveness from the thing it's meant to preserve, but in the *very action of preserving*, in the very demonstration of it being true to its nature, in the exercising of its very reason to exist. Likewise, light has value insofar as it *functions as a dispeller of darkness*, bringing clarity and security to all who benefit from it. In other words, what counts is the **INFLUENCE** of these two commodities.

It would come as a major surprise if this was a new revelation to anyone reading this article, as we grow up being taught these two dynamics. What is the surprise though, is how easy it is to become content with celebrating the first and not practicing the second. Too much of what passes for modern day Christianity seems to be an attempt to stay 'pure', stay "true" to our essentials in the face of stiff opposition from the world. So, we defend our basic tenets at all costs; we judge what is at odds with our understanding of the truth. We far more comfortably settle for **DISTINCTION**. Our argument is that if people don't know **WHAT** salt is or **WHAT** light is, they will never know saltiness or brightness. Of course, this is correct and necessary, but, if that's **ALL** we do, we settle for **SURVIVAL**.

If, however, we understand that it's in the very nature of salt to preserve something fragile, arrest decay and rot and, enhance the taste of something; if we accept that the very nature of light is push back darkness, facilitate freedom of safe movement and remove fear, we will never aim for *distinction* and *distinctiveness* only, but will relish the idea that we can *influence* our society in the way that Jesus did so effectively and efficiently. My guess is that we shy away from an engagement with society far too easily and that we excuse this action on the grounds of "we're powerless to do anything about" May I suggest that it's less to do with powerlessness and more to do with intimidation, threat or personal comfort?

How do we overcome our reluctance to or fear of being influencers in our society? I believe we have to come to the place where we

- **SURRENDER** fully to Father's will for us
- **SACRIFICIALLY** commit to allow God to use us in changing our society
- **SERVING** with a servant heart, wherever He may open doors for us

John Stott, in reflecting on these verses, speaks of the fact that Christians have "the power of a dedicated minority" to draw on when it comes to influencing society for the good. He quotes sociologist Robert Bellah of Princeton University, who says: "We should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a vision of a just and gentle world."

The quality of a whole culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision.

As we end 2013 and enter 2014, may we be aware of the fact that not everything that really counts in this life can be counted. What does count is our faithfully being salt of the earth and consistently letting our light shine before men, so they see, through our good deeds, the living illustration of the truths we proclaim, and glorify our Father in heaven.

Keith



KEITH AND SHELLEY du PLESSIS

KINGDOM CLIPS



TONY FITZGERALD

Christmas! It's Awesome!

This Christmas season we invite you to "selah" – Be still and awed by wonder!

Selah is used about 70 times in the Bible as God's people were encouraged to pause, reflect and consider. The early church was born experiencing this. It says in Acts chapter 2: 43 "Everyone was filled with awe." They stood in awe at the greatness of God and the wonders and miraculous signs that were performed. The King of the Kingdom of God had come, it was awesome!

The birth of Jesus was a wonder and in a time of much busyness at Christmas when we remember His birth, it is good to selah. The Message Bible says in Psalm 46:10 "Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything!" When the systems of the world fail it is good to be reminded that we are in a Kingdom that knows nothing but increase. Christmas reminds us that a Savior was born to be King and through the salvation He provides we are privileged to be citizens of His Kingdom, part of His royal family. It doesn't get much more awesome than that! "Selah".

On behalf of the Apostolic Council, we believe with you for a blessed Christmas and a Kingdom expanding New Year.

Tony & Marilyn

COTN EVENTS	DATE
COTN LEADERSHIP GARIEP SA	9-12 APRIL 2014
COTN DAY OF PRAYER	14 SEPTEMBER 2014
COTN LEADERSHIP MISSOURI USA	9-12 OCTOBER 2014

For any comments, suggestions and news,
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the COTN Virtual Resource Centre at communication@cotn.org

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