

# Salt

*Visuals: some salt in a small bowl and several other bowls with water in them. Try to ensure that each bowl is different in size and design to all the others.*

I want to look at salt today, because when I first heard about salt in the Bible, I was puzzled. Why was it so important, and how was it used back then?

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt\\_in\\_the\\_Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salt_in_the_Bible)

<http://www.biblepages.net/fo14.htm>

<http://voices.yahoo.com/meaning-salt-bible-5916376.html>

## Overview

Salt is versatile and unique. It is the only mineral we eat. It's used on roads to keep them safe and in saline drip-feeds in hospitals; as a condiment on food and to soften hard water. It has over 14,000 uses and is referred to in The Bible more than thirty times.

## Some mentions from the Bible itself:

1. It was used to bring out flavour (Job 6:6): a mark of good taste!
2. It was used in cattle fodder (Isaiah 30:24): cattle farmers still put salt licks in fields to this day
3. It was used on grain offerings and burnt sacrifices (Leviticus 2:13; Ezekiel 43:24; Mark 9:49)
4. It was a sign that land was barren (Job 39:6; Psalm 107:34; Jeremiah 17:6)
5. The land of defeated cities was salted to dedicate them to a god and pronounce a curse (Judges 9:45)
6. Newborn babies were rubbed with it (Ezekiel 16:4). One source says this was a sign that they would be raised to have integrity and be truthful
7. It was included in the priestly anointing oil for Aaron and his sons (Exodus 30:35)
8. It was a sign of friendship or covenant, including between God and David's line (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5)
9. Jesus said his disciples were the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13; Luke 14:34) and that retaining their saltiness was essential. Contaminated salt was only good for binding water to roads to make them less dusty
10. He also mentioned that the disciples should 'have salt among themselves', perhaps referring to covenant or friendship (Mark 9:50)
11. Paul used salt as a metaphor for speaking with grace and consideration (Colossians 4:6). "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

I want to pick up on this last point. Let's have two readings from different parts of the Bible.

## Bible reading 1

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. (James 3:9-12)

## Bible reading 2

The men of the city said to Elisha, "Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive." "Bring me a new bowl," he said, "and put salt in it." So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, "This is what the LORD says: 'I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.'" And the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken. (2 Kings 2:19-22)

## **So, what can we learn here?**

For a start, salt is powerful stuff that has a distinctive effect whenever it's used. Salt seems to be both a good and a bad thing in the Bible. But maybe how it's used is the real issue.

Elisha used salt to halt corruption: to purify. The bad water was healed in a prophetic act by God's grace and a declaration. God made a promise- a covenant- that day.

You may have heard the Scripture that says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." The next bit says, "Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips." (Proverbs 4:23)

Jesus said, "Out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34)

*It's vital that this is said carefully and 'personalised' to yourself, so that it doesn't come across as accusation...*

I find that my heart is always where the problems start. Lots of people say religions start wars: no they don't. The issue is inside- our mouths simply say what we've already been considering there. It's like a spring of water that has its source deep within, where those secret motives are. I'm asking myself more and more: 'When I talk to someone- or about someone- what sort of spring gushes out of my mouth?'

### *Indicate the bowls*

Imagine these bowls are unresolved issues that you have with other people: conversations where you were less than kind, or grudges you're holding. There are probably certain people who wind you up! The thing is, though- these bowls are poisonous.

There's a choice and a challenge here: let them continue to bother you, or speak grace into them, speak God's Word into them and change the situation. It's up to you: what's it going to be?

*Let it sink in briefly*

Here's another Scripture: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1)

## **Anecdote**

*Briefly tell a story of an occasion where you faced down wrath, physical threat or resolved a tricky situation peacefully with God's help, focusing on what you said and their response*

What you do to resolve this may be difficult. But it will be worth it- for your own freedom and for theirs, and for everyone's good. You're not alone in this- you can ask God for help and wisdom.

## **Prayerful response**

Let's pray for a couple of minutes. Call to mind someone you're having trouble with and ask God to show you how to deal with them. Think about how you can speak words of grace. If you want to, take a pinch of salt and throw it in one of the bowls as a sign that you're going to deal with this.

*Allow time for this to happen.*

*Conclude with a spontaneous prayer asking for God's help and wisdom, both for you and for everyone else. Add a pinch of salt to each bowl as you do so.*

## **A thought to remember**

May your conversation always be seasoned with grace -even under pressure! (Colossians 4:6)

Amen