

## ELEVATE: Living Life At The Highest Level

### Session #2: Incarnational Influence

**Session Intro:** Over the course of the year we have been talking about 'best things' and living life at the highest level. This session is about influence and evangelism – two things we want to do the BEST way possible. Too often we choose methods that are comfortable for us but are not very effective. They may be safe or easy but they are not really all that successful. The text we are looking at, Matthew 5:13-16, highlights the ultimate strategy for affecting change in our world. Values like infiltration, penetration, saturation, authenticity and integrity will need to be discussed in order to help students understand what it really means to be salt and light.

**Session Objective:** The objective of this session is to get students thinking about what it means to infiltrate culture and to have a witness of character and lifestyle. What do we need to do to be available and credible as sources of influence and guidance in our confused and disoriented culture?

**Minimum Prep:** Read through the entire session outline. Prepare an environment where discussion can occur.

**Extended Prep:** There are a few things you could do to really add punch to this lesson. You will need to have copies of old and current newspapers and magazines and some highlighters, markers and scissors. Also have an overhead transparency or a whiteboard on hand. For extra fun, consider duct-taping one student's head into total darkness (blindfold first and then duct-tape) for the entire evening. Have them do all the activities blind. Consider playing Dodgeball. Provide a helmet.

### Session Outline

#### Leader Preamble:

*I think that there are some strange ideas out there about how Christians are supposed to exert influence and affect change. Holding up signs at sporting events that say John 3:16 on them, or handing out tracts at the bus station downtown don't seem to be overly effective. Now I want to say right off the bat that trying something that doesn't work is probably better than not trying anything at all. I also believe that God can use our biggest foul ups to do some pretty awesome stuff. Having said that, we do want to try and do everything we do for God THE BEST WAY we know how. I think there are some better ways to do evangelism and to exert influence. Jesus gives us some good imagery to chew on in Matthew 5:13-16. Let's read that together. (Display on screen or read aloud) He gives us two images to guide our thinking: Salt and Light.*

*Salt was used to give flavour and to preserve meat from decay. The only trick was it had to saturate the meat to have any effect. Just sliding the shaker near to the sandwich didn't have much of an effect. In a world without electricity, light was a pretty valuable commodity. You had to have it to walk safely on the uneven ground and you had to have it to know what was out there in the dark that might want to eat you or harm you in some way. Tonight we want to talk about how our strategies for evangelism and exerting influence need to be guided by those images. Let's break up into our Small Groups to discuss that in team.*

### **Small Group Preparations:**

Small Group leaders will need to have 4-5 copies of newspapers and/or magazines on hand as well as some scissors, markers and highlighters. When your group assembles challenge them to go through the newspapers/magazines and clip or highlight places within our culture that need guidance and spiritual influence. Tell them to work in pairs of 2-3 and that they must produce pictures highlighting 5 areas where the Kingdom message needs to be heard.

Leader Hint: Places like advertising, the music industry, sports, government, big business, relationships etc. can be expected.

After the groups have finished this task, have them share the results with the rest of the students. Collect all of the suggestions onto an overhead transparency or white board.

Transition by saying something like:

*Alright! We have a working list of targets for infiltration with the Gospel message. Now let's spend the rest of tonight in our Small Groups discussing strategies for infiltrating, penetrating and effecting change in all those places. For time purposes we will work in a more in-depth fashion with the top five suggestions on the list.*

## Small Group Questions:

1. Let's focus in on the first place mentioned: \_\_\_\_\_. How would one of us get into that context? Let's focus first on infiltration. List five things we could do to 'get in'.

Now let's think about influence. What are some issues within this context that the Gospel could speak to? List five issues below.

*Leader Hint: Some of this will be really practical stuff. If you want to infiltrate the advertising industry you will need a B.A. in Marketing or business. If you want to infiltrate the media world you will need to study journalism. Help students understand that the target is out there in the world and we are 'Under Cover Agents' and that we need to be intentional in our infiltration efforts.*

Now let's focus in on methodology. How should we exert influence in the five issue areas we have listed? Should we wear T-shirts with messages on them? Do a 'work to rule' campaign? Carry giant sign boards? List five methods below that might work.

2. Let's do that exercise again for each of the other four places we identified as targets for Gospel influence. Remember to discuss infiltration (how to get in), influence (what to speak to), and penetration (methods that will really break through). Go and do that now.
3. Let's check out Acts 17:16-17, and then Acts 17:22-31. In this passage Paul SEES some things in his host culture that cry out for the Gospel message and he finds a way to build a conversational bridge in order to talk to them about it. Having spiritual conversations can be tough! Tell us about some of the things you have been able to use as BRIDGES for spiritual conversations with your unsaved friends?

*Leader Hint: We are looking for contact points here. Relationships, sexuality, body image etc will all provide conversation openers for students to take advantage of. For example, one student might say to another as they are clothes shopping: "You would look great in this top". The Christian girl might respond: "You know, recently I've developed a whole new outlook on attracting guys. I think I've realised that you tend to catch what you fish for. If I'm using my body as bait I'll probably end up just catching some guy interested in my body. I'm actually thinking of toning down my wardrobe in order to see what I catch when I put myself on 'the hook'."*

*Bingo! Body image and sexuality provided a contact point for a spiritual conversation. Do you think the friend might want to know more about where all of this counter-cultural philosophy is coming from? Help students identify other places where bridges for conversation can happen.*

4. ***Acts 17:17-18 seem to indicate that Paul was equally comfortable talking to Jews, Gentiles, people in synagogues, people in the marketplace, Stoics and Epicureans. That is not the case with most of us. Most of us find certain types of people harder than others to talk to. Who do you find it easiest to have spiritual conversations with? Friends? Strangers? Family? Who do you find hardest?***
5. ***Why not finish up your time together by going around the circle and each stating one name of a person that you would like to have a spiritual conversation with this week. Pray and ask God for a bridge.***

**Leader Note:** Contact Rob McAlpine at [compass@baptist.ca](mailto:compass@baptist.ca) or Paul Carter – [paul@lpgc.ca](mailto:paul@lpgc.ca) with any thoughts or questions suggestions.

### Comments and Feedback:

**Leader Note:** This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.