

## Rock Us: *Godsense: Experiencing Life Through the Five Senses of Jesus* Part 3: Sweet & Salty or Sour & Bitter

Taste is an incredible sense. It helps us to enjoy the incredible food God's bounty. Think about all the great foods & flavors out there! Taste is also something that can help protect us- our tongues can often sense when some foods have gone bad or when something is a harmful chemical or poisonous thing to avoid. Taste, like the other senses we studied, is an amazing & highly complex sense that points to God. Tasting starts with taste buds; each adult has between 2000 and 4,000. And taste buds are not limited to your tongue, they can also be located on the roof & walls of your mouth, throat, and esophagus. We can taste four basic tastes- sweet, salty, sour & bitter each at 10 intensity levels. A fifth taste (savory) is also thought to exist. Given all the flavor & intensity combinations, a human can experience up to 100,000 different unique flavors. The process of tasting is very complex. Each taste bud has a set of sensory cells inside the taste buds are renewed each week. These sensory cells are sensitive to a specific set of different elements, chemical compounds or proteins. For instance, the salt-detecting sensory cells detect sodium and chlorine (the elements in salt or NaCl). The sensory cells send impulses to the nerves to the olfactory bulb, a smelling organ at the base of the nose. These taste impulses combine with smell impulses and are sent to the gustatory cortex in the brain. Like hearing & seeing, tasting occurs in the brain.

So we've been talking about the 5 sense of Jesus & I'm not going to be talking about what food He liked or didn't like. We are gonna talk about the ways of life He led based on the flavors of taste: sweet, salt, sour & bitter, and how we can learn & live based on His perfect example.

So let's look at the taste of sweetness. Sweet foods bring joy, happiness and smiles. A sweet life brings the same. A sweet life is a life of kindness, of caring, of joyfulness and optimism. When I look at Jesus, I see that He exemplifies those qualities. He cared for people and kindly took care of them. At the wedding of Cana, Jesus performed His first miracle- turning water into sweet wine (**Jn 2:1-11**). Jesus personified & exemplified the sweetest of lives: He sweetly & kindly helped others in their needs, pain, suffering and mourning. Jesus death on the cross for our sins was the sweetest sacrifice ever to God, and the sweet kindness & love that He demonstrated for us is what makes our eternal life possible. Jesus' sweetly-led life is the greatest blessing we could ever ask for. And if you live a life of sweetness, you too can be a great blessing to others as well.

The second quality of taste is saltiness. Salt enhances flavor. It make good things great. And salty foods (like pretzels & chips) leave you wanting more. So a salt life enhances life, make things better & more alive. Salt is also a preservative, so a salt life honors & preserves life. A salt life is also one that points others toward God and leaves people wanting *more of God!* And Jesus lived that life. When people met Jesus, their lives were not only enhances, they were totally transformed! When people met Jesus, they wanted more of Him, they wanted more of God! And Jesus life was all about preserving life and defeating death (which He did for us on the cross and through His resurrection.) Jesus said we should have the salt life too & He talked about it in **Mt 5:13a**, "*You are the salt of the earth...*" He clarified this in the next verses, "*You are the light of the world...In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father*" (**Mt:5:14a, 16**). So our lives can be life life-enhancing salt, leaving people wanting more of our Savior Jesus and preserving & honoring all human life.

So the sweet life and the salt life both go together, just as kindness and godliness go hand-in-hand. They compliment each other. But the other kinds of taste also reflect a certain kind of life: sour & bitter. A sour life is self-absorbed, self-focused and selfish. A sour life points out the negatives in others, while trying to mask its own bad qualities. A sour life is sarcastic, argumentative, gloating, rude, foolish, prideful, uncaring & nasty. A sour person is someone you don't want as your roommate in college because they will make your experience absolutely horrible! So when we look at Jesus' life, we see He is the exact opposite: kind, gentle, humble, kind, wise, respectful caring and friendly (the qualities of a sweet life).

The sour life often goes hand-in-hand with, a bitter life takes it even further A bitter life is one of unforgiveness, hatred, darkness, revenge, cruelty, anger, rage, abuse, domination, destruction, death and evil. A bitter life seeks to use & ruin other ruin people, and actually leads people away from God (opposite of the salt life). Examples of bitter life include: bullies, players, pimps, abusers, drug dealers, corrupt politicians, terrorists and cult leaders. Of course, this is the opposite of Jesus' salt life of forgiveness, peacefulness, protection, freedom, goodness, love & sacrifice.

So in any given circumstance, we can choose to be a force for God & for goodness by being sweet & salty. Or we can choose to be a force of evil & darkness by being sour & bitter. Those are the two main choices you have. The power is really yours to choose which way you want to go. So like every time in this series, I ask you, "Do you want to be like Jesus? Do you want to live the life of sweetness & salt? Do you want to bring God's Kingdom more into this world. Do you want to bless others & help point them to Jesus, leaving them with a desire to want to know Him more? Or do you want the alternative: the sour & bitter life? This is the kind of life that Jesus *absolutely* did not display & He commands us not to live like that. So the choice is yours in every situation, conversation, everything. You need to decide...

### **BIBLE SCRIPTURES**

**Eph 4:32 Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.**

**Gal 5:22-23 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!**

**Mt:5:13a, 14a, 16 "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father "**

**Col 4:6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.**

**Eph 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.**

**Heb 12:15b Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many.**

**Dt 30:19 Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!**

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**1. Of the four main flavors -sweet, salt, sour & bitter - what's your favorite? What's your favorite food from this flavor category?**

**2. Dan described two types of life: the sweet & salt life and the sour & bitter life. How would you define these types of lives?**

**3a. Read Eph 4:32 & Gal5:22. Jesus led the sweetest of lives of all time. What can we learn about the sweet life from Him?**

**3b. How have sweet people in your life blessed you? What have you learned from them?**

**4. Read Mt:5:13-16. People who met Jesus wanted more of God. How have salt-of-the-earth people impacted your faith & life?**

**5. Read Eph 4:31 & Heb 12:15b. We all know sour/bitter people. Why does God so strongly tell us to get rid of these bad qualities?**

**6. In every life circumstance, we can either be sweet/salt or sour/bitter. Think of a circumstance where you were sour or bitter? What was the result? What would have happened if you'd responded in sweet/salt way instead?**

**7. Read Dt 30:19 The choice of what kind of life you want to live is up to you. Do you want to lead the sweet & salt life of Jesus or the opposite? What needs to change & what are you willing to do to see that this change happens?**

**CLOSING PRAYER: Lord God, thank you for sending Jesus Christ, the embodiment of sweetness & salt, to save us. God, help us to see our own sourness & bitterness. Through your Spirit, replace them with sweetness & a desire to point people to You. We love You and want to do Your will in life? Help us, transform us & use us as instruments of Your love. In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.**