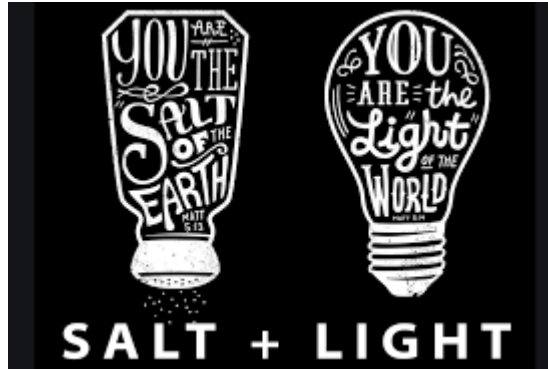


Faith Bible Study Guide
For the Week of February 8, 2026
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany Sunday
“Be Prepared: To Be Salt & Light”



Be still [2 Minutes]: As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

CENTERING WORDS/ WORDS TO PONDER: In the beginning God brought forth light out of the darkness. This light has shown throughout the centuries in the lives of prophets and teachers, young and old, and in the life of Christ. This light still shines today in you. Let your light shine!

OPENING PRAYER: Amazing God, you have gathered us from many places to come together and praise you this day. For this we are grateful! As we study today, may our minds be opened to learn your wisdom. May our eyes be opened to places that need healing. May our hands be opened to do your good work. May our hearts be opened to your Holy Spirit, who gifts us and guides us. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]

1. Take a breath. How is it with your soul today?
Feel free to answer several questions (or briefly all)...
2. **Where have you felt most “lit up” this past week?**
(Something that gave you joy, courage, or clarity.)
3. **Where have you felt dimmed, muted, or hidden?**
(A place where it felt easier to stay quiet or small.)
4. **What’s one place in your life that feels a little flavorless right now?**
(Routine, relationship, work, news consumption, even faith.)
5. **Who helped bring out your best self recently—your “saltiness”?**
(Someone who reminded you who you are.)

Optional Scout tie-in:

If your soul had a Scout Law word today—trustworthy, helpful, kind, brave—which one would it be? Why?

Be the Word: Scripture Lesson: Matthew 5:13-20

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? It’s good for nothing except to be thrown away and trampled under people’s feet.

14 You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can’t be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

17 “Don’t even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven’t come to do away with them but to fulfill them. **18** I say to you very seriously that as long as heaven and earth exist, neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen will be erased from the Law until everything there becomes a reality. **19**

Therefore, whoever ignores one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called the lowest in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps these commands and teaches people to keep them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** I say to you that unless your righteousness is greater than the righteousness of the legal experts and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

L: The word of God for all People.

P: **Thanks be to God.**

Be rooted: [Bible Study]

EXEGESIS & COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:13–20 (Salt, Light, and Serious Faith)

1. “You are the salt of the earth”

Jesus doesn’t say “*try to be*” or “*someday you will become*.” This is **identity language**, not performance language. In the ancient world, salt was:

- **Preservative** – it kept things from spoiling
- **Flavor** – it brought out what was already there
- **Essential** – not decorative, but necessary

Salt doesn’t exist for itself. It exists **for what it touches**. And notice: Jesus isn’t asking for *more* salt—just salt that remembers what it is. When salt “loses its saltiness,” it’s not that it becomes evil. It becomes **ineffective**. That’s a gentle but serious warning: faith that never touches the world eventually forgets its purpose.

2. “You are the light of the world”

Light in Scripture is never hoarded. It’s directional, revealing, shared. Jesus names two things light does:

- **It can’t stay hidden** (a city on a hill)
- **It’s meant to be seen by everyone in the house**

This isn’t about spotlighting ourselves—it’s about refusing to dim what God has already lit. And verse 16 is key:

“So that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

The point of light is **praise that lands on God**, not applause that sticks to us.

3. Law, Fulfillment, and “Greater Righteousness”

This part can feel like a hard pivot—but it’s actually deeply connected.

Jesus is saying:

- The Law is not being erased
- It’s being **filled up with love, mercy, and embodied faith**

The “greater righteousness” Jesus names is not stricter rule-keeping—it’s **deeper faithfulness**:

- Faith that shows up in real bodies
- In public life
- In relationships
- In how we treat the least visible

Salt and light aren’t abstract ideas. They’re how faith looks when it’s lived.

Discussion Questions

1. **Why do you think Jesus uses ordinary things—salt and light—to describe discipleship?**
What does that say about where faith belongs?
2. **Where do you see the temptation today to hide light—or to dull it so it won’t offend?**
3. **What’s the difference between being “visible” and being “faithful”?**
Can you think of examples of one without the other?
4. **Jesus says our light should shine so others see “good works.”**
What do “good works” look like in 2026—not just personally, but communally?
5. **How does baptism and church membership help us be salt and light together—rather than alone?**

JUST FOR FUN...Cultural & Social Commentary ***Salt, Light, and the Super Bowl Halftime Show***

The Super Bowl halftime show is one of the rare moments when the whole world is watching the same thing at the same time. It becomes a kind of cultural “lampstand.” And every year, the question isn’t just Was it entertaining? but What did it make visible?

Some reflections to explore together:

- ***Light reveals what is already present.*** When artists bring forward stories of race, culture, struggle, joy, or protest, it can feel “too much” to some—but light always feels disruptive before it feels healing.
- ***Salt brings out flavor—it doesn’t replace the food.*** Diversity isn’t about changing the Gospel; it’s about revealing how rich God’s world already is. Bland

faith often prefers sameness. Jesus prefers fullness.

- *The discomfort some people feel says less about the light and more about what we're used to seeing illuminated.*

Questions to ponder:

- *What stories do we usually see center stage?*
- *Whose light do we try to dim by calling it “political” or “divisive”?*
- *How might God be using culture—imperfect as it is—to shine light on God’s beloved people?*

Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]:

Practicing Salt & Light This Week...

1. Salt Practice – Bring Out the Good

Intentionally affirm someone whose gifts often go unnoticed.
Name what you see. Be specific. Add flavor.

2. Light Practice – Don’t Hide

Share a story of faith, hope, or courage this week—not loudly, but honestly.
Let someone see how God is at work in you.

3. Community Practice – Shared Light

Pay attention to whose voices are missing in your circles—church, work, media.
Ask: *Who isn’t being seen? And how can I help lift the basket?*

Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:



Scout Sunday 2026 (just missing Junior GS 5365)



*We lift up prayers for all of God's
Creation. Lord Hear our Prayers.*

continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Rev. Alan Mark
Alice Kajiya
Alvena & Tom Fukuhara
Amy Higa
Anthony Anderson, Sr.
Apolosi Lokotui
Audrey Goto
Austin Maeda
Barbara Tamura
Betty Kobata
Bill Morris
Brian Okumura
Cami Bruns
Chic Miyake
Christine Keim
Claretta Foster
Corinne & Douglas Higa
Dan Segawa
Danny Tokudomi
Dan Yamashita
Deron Tokishi
Diane & Destiny
Ueda-Banda
Dr. DoAnn Tsuneo
Kaneko
Dr. Nguyen
Elaine Yoshida

Eleanor Nagai
Emi Hino
Ernie Santiago
Faith Tanaka
Florence Nakakura
Frank Sato
Fred Oshiro
Geri Shiraki
Glenn & Millie
Shimizu
Grace Tochiara
Grant Hanada
Harriet Tateyama
Haru Yasunaga
Hisako Shohara
Ingrid Peterson
Irene Munesato
Jack Honda
Jayne Watanabe
Jehiel Vinluan
Jennie Shitakubo
Jerry Osaka
Joanne Sato
Joelle Peelgreen
Jordan Sasaki
Joye Barker
Juliet Koyanagi
Kaitlyn Sabedra

Karlynn Fernandez
Kay Saxton
Kian Tehrani
Kiki Hashimoto
Rev. Kim Montenegro
Kelsey DeGracia
Kenny Medeiros
Kyle Ichikawa
Larry Takumi
Layne Nakasone
Linda Jung
Liz Harner
Lorraine & Yukio Inouye
Lucas Yniguez
Marion Antoku
Mae Nakakihara
Mary Jung
Mary & Bob Keily
[siblings]
Mary Marchand
Mary Tamura
Mary Tamura (Tsutsui)
Maxine Butcher
Miyoko Ahn
Mutsuko Nishi
Nancy Matsushima
Noah Miyagawa-Sue
Oscar Phillip Bland Jr.
Pam Fink

Patty Kobayashi
Priscilla Kandel
Raquel M. Martinez
Rev. Mike Hiranuma
Ron Hamaguchi
Rick Katsuki
Ruth Hirata
Ruth Taira
Sandra Minjarez-
Grange
Stan Miyasato
Steph Matsunaga
Sue Hamada
Sue Hasegawa
Susan DeGracia
Susan Mizuki
Susan Slade
Takai Finau
Theresa Apicella
Tommy Sakaguchi
Tseyli Mantooth
Victoria DelaTorre
Walker Wilkerson
Wayne Shimizu
Whitney Nakayama
Winnie Osaki

**those in Community
Living & Homecare**

Chic Miyake
Doris Kato
Emma Horiuchi
Faith Tanaka
Rev. Harry Fujimoto
Irene & Tak Ryono
Jane Kiyohara
Marion Antoku
Mary Jung
Nobie Shiokari
Ruth Hirata
Sets Asano
Sue Hasegawa

**for our Worldwide
Community**

**for the Leadership
of our Country and
our Churches**

**for the immigrants:
migrants, refugees,
asylees**

**for our siblings in
Christ who struggle
and in need of
God's care**

**for those who live in
through wars,
unrest, and violence**

**for those suffering
and rebuilding after
national disasters
and man-made
catastrophes**

for All Our Saints

Karen Matsuyama & Shitakubo families, on the passing of Fred Matsuyama (1/24/2026).

Rev. Derek & Pam Nakano and family, on the passing of Kraig Nakano (1/25/2026).

The Maruya family on the passing of Masae Maruyama (1/2026).

Keith Tokuhara and family on the passing of Keith's aunt, Helen Nozaki (1/6/26).
Celebration of Life: March 7, 2026, 2pm.

The Otsubo family on the passing of Dorothy Otsubo (11/2025).

Celebrations!

Baby Adeline "Andie" Jane Yamamoto born to parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto on January 2, 2026. Proud Great-Grandma is Jane Kiyohara.

Baby Ryden Richard Wilkerson, born January 14, 2026. Proud Grandparents, Teresa Sato & Rick Wilkerson.

UPDATED 2.6.2026

Celebrations:

- Baby Adeline "Andie" Jane Yamamoto, proud parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto; great-granddaughter of Jane Kiyohara (1/2/26)
- Ryden Richard Wilkerson, proud grandparents, Teresa Sato and Rick Wilkerson (1/14/26)
- New Members! We welcome Risa Vargas and Stephanie Matsunaga!
- Retirement for Rev. Keith & Viki Inouye

Birthdays:

Maddie Sakurai-Lopez turned 3 (2/2/26)
Amara Mark-Schwiebert, Alice Mark (2/6)
Christine Bone (2/10)

For healing and recovery

- This week asking for prayers for:

- Darrell's auntie, MalPina Chan (in Seattle) - Traveling mercies to Darrell and family
- Stephanie Inouye's in-laws: Yukio and Lorraine Inouye
- Lynne Vinluan's parents: Corinne & Douglas Higa
- Audrey Goto recovery
- Alice Kajiya
- Larry Takumi
- Harriet Tateyama
- Tseyli Mantooth
- Kim Foster & Claretta Foster:
V'rhaniku Haynes: high risk pregnancy, 5 months, baby girl
- Walker Wilkerson
- Kiki Hashimoto (Sue Kunisaki -friend)
- Rev's friends: Stan Miyasato, Darin Arntson
- (Norma Ishigo)
- Susan Slade's friend, Sherrie
- Raquel Martinez (Julie's goddaughter)
- Mrs. Davis (friend of Kim Foster)
- Pam Fink
- Diane Ueda-Banda
- Victoria DelaTorre
- Alvena Fukuhara & Tom
- Mae Nakakihara
- Mary Tamura
- Jennie Shitakubo
- Douglas and Corinne Higa (Lynne Vinluan's parents)
- Jehiel Vinluan
- Dan Yamashita
- Apolosi Lokotui
- Susan Cordova (diagnosed with 3 types of cancer)
- All of our Homebound friends

Traveling Mercies

- Nargis Basu - Traveling to India for 3 months

World Concerns:

- All who struggle, suffer, experience pain and grief...
- US government and leadership (all of them); restoration of benefits, medical, food stamps, social security...
- War-torn countries, Natural disasters...
- Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees losing rights and protections...
- Health Care system
- The homeless and impoverished
- The people of Venezuela and Nigeria
- Leadership (including clergy)
- All of God's children
- Activists/Demonstrators in MN: Renee Good and most recently Alex Jeffrey Pretti (in senseless killings), the clergy who stood together with laity and were detained and the 32+ who have been accounted for as died/killed while in detainment.

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

- Pastor Becky Hirata's mother, Miyoko Ahn (2/7)
- Mary Tamura, grandmother of Kevin Tsutsui (1/31)
- Kraig Nakano (1/25) - private family service
- (Masae Maruyama)
- Fred Matsuyama (holding Karen and Jennie and family in prayer)
- Lawrence Blake (Pastor at CGC)*
- Kelly Kwan & Peg Tadakuma on the passing of Kelly's grandma, Grace Megsayo
- Family of Terry Sato (passed 1/1/26) (Neighbor Iizuka's, Friends of Jason and

Iseri's)

- Helen Nozaki (aunt of Keith Tokuhara) - Celebration of Life, March 7, 2026, 2pm
- Thomas Kinoshita (community) - Celebration of Life, January 31, 2026, 11am
- Rev. John Miyahara and the Ishihara family on the passing of Dorothy's son (100yo), Tim Ishihara (12/13/25)

And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing

God of light and flavor,
you have already named us salt and light—
not because we are perfect,
but because your grace is alive in us.

Where our faith has gone bland, restore its joy.
Where our light has been hidden, give us courage.
Teach us to shine in ways that heal,
to season the world with kindness,
and to live a righteousness rooted in love.

May our lives point not to ourselves,
but to you—
the source of all light.
Amen.