



## The President's Perspective



### Salt

Recently, I have been doing much study on our Lord's Prayer in John 17. This prayer comes on the heels of a statement Jesus makes in the last verse of chapter 16, verse 33, where He says, "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the WORLD." In chapter 17, He mentions the "world" 14 times. It is obvious, as He is preparing for His crucifixion, resurrection and ultimate departure from His disciples, that He is attempting to prepare them for the "world" that they will face after he leaves. What He asks of His Father for His disciples is, to me, interesting and vital for us living in a 21st Century world. To understand what Jesus is praying about in John 17, we must first understand the term "world." The word, itself, comes from the Greek word "cosmos," and can have three distinct meanings depending on its usage in context. Those three possible meanings of the word "world" are as follows:

1. The MATERIAL UNIVERSE (as in Luke 9:25 where it is stated, "For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole WORLD, and lose himself.")
2. The world's MINDSET (world system, as in I John 2:15, "Love not the WORLD, neither the things that are in the WORLD.")
3. MANKIND (people) (as in John 3:16, "For God so loved the WORLD.")

In John 17:15, Jesus prays for His disciples not that they would be taken "out of the WORLD (material universe)" but that they would be kept "from the evil." My observations are that, over the years, the church has attempted to remove itself as far as possible from the "world" almost trying (totally in vain) to remove ourselves from the entire material universe. That, of course, is impossible. What Jesus prayed for was not removal FROM the world, but safety for us IN it.

I thank the Lord almost every day for the privilege of having grown up in a Christian home and having the opportunity of attending a Christian high school and college. However, I am observing a disturbing trend. In the 1920's and 30's, as liberalism began to permeate our culture, we saw the rise of Christian colleges to counteract the liberal influence of universities that were corrupting the minds of American youth. In the 1950's, 60's and 70's we saw the rise of Christian elementary and high schools to help train Christian youth and counteract the world's influence. While these Christian schools have been greatly used of God, I am troubled by the current move that I see among so many in my sphere of influence. I recently heard

critical comments coming from a Christian college president, stating that his college was unique and "blessed of God" because he only prepares young people for the ministry. It's as if Christian universities that prepare young people for other vocations in the "world" are now almost anathema. Note the shift.

We have moved from Christians living in and being salt in this world to almost an isolationist mindset. Young people can go to a Christian elementary and high school, as well a Christian college. Once they graduate from that Christian college, they are told that serving God means going back to a Christian high school and teaching the next generation to go through the same cycle. PLEASE DO NOT MISUNDERSTAND!!! I am not being critical, in any way, of Christian education. I am just noting that it is now possible to go from cradle to the grave with our interaction being primarily only with ourselves. It is salt ministering only to other salt. In essence, it's keeping all the salt in the salt shaker. Where are the Christian school trained youth ministering out in the world and having a culture shaping influence. Yes, we need many more pastors, evangelists and missionaries. But, we also need Christians in politics, public education, sports, the arts, writing, etc. Is that not what Daniel was through three different administrations? He served in the political realm and did so with distinction. His excellence was what opened up his opportunity for profound witness in the public sector.

I know that these comments may be misunderstood. However, I will run that risk to sound an alarm to the church. With all the money being invested in educating our youth, I long to see more influence in the world. Salt must come into contact with that which it is to influence, if it is to be of any value. Salt in the saltshaker is not what Jesus intended. Its time to get the salt out of the shaker and onto the world, to savor it with truth, and retard the spoilage of our culture.

*Dave Kistler*

President,

H.O.P.E Ministries International  
[www.hopeministriesonline.com](http://www.hopeministriesonline.com)

Email comments to:  
[davekistler@hopeministriesonline.com](mailto:davekistler@hopeministriesonline.com)

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