

Open Hands: Stewardship with Kingdom Vision Influence in the Marketplace: Bring Light and Salt

Good morning church! I am so glad that you are here today. Whether you work in an office, run a business, serve in the community, or explore the next opportunity. God has placed me where you are for a purpose. That is what Pastor John Johnson always told me that at Star of Hope Mission in Houston in 2023 while I was in the Spiritual Recovery Program. He told me that God put me there for a purpose. Another one of his clients named Gerald told me that God is working on me and should let God work on me. Today, we are going to talk about how we can be a light and salt in the marketplace. How our faith can influence our work, colleagues and communities. I believe God put me in a place in my life for a reason and received the wake up call of my life in 2011. I explained this to some clients while I was in the Spiritual Recovery Program at Star of Hope Mission in Houston in 2023. The marketplace is not just a place for business. It is a mission field. As Christians, our influence should transform culture, business practices and relationships around us. Salt enhances flavor and preserves, light exposes darkness and guides.

The marketplace is every environment outside the church walls where believers live, work, serve and interact with society. The marketplace includes corporate offices, small businesses, factories, government and civic institutions, schools, universities, nonprofits, workforce programs, side businesses, entrepreneurship, social media, digital spaces, and community leadership settings. Jesus speaks about being salt and light in Matthew 5:13-16 in the world. The marketplace represents systems, economies,

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”-Matthew 5:13-16

Salt preserves, enhances and brings value. We want to maintain integrity and ethical practices in business. We want to add value to others through mentoring, teaching or service. We need to be a voice of encouragement, positively and fairness in the workplace. A business person refuses to cut corners yet inspires colleagues by modeling ethical choices. Cultures and political life. Faith becomes visible in the marketplace. The marketplace is where faith meets real life. It is where we work, lead, serve, build, create and influence. The marketplace is where we create opportunities, restore dignity through work, and bring God character in economic systems. Salt preserves against corruption. Salt enhances what is really there. For example, integrity, excellence and work ethic. Light exposes darkness. Light guides others. Light provides wisdom, courage, and discernment at work. Lead without being loud means influence through character, clarity and consistency. Leading without being loud means leadership with competence. I mean be prepared, know your craft, follow through and get results. In the marketplace, skills earn attention before words do. This statement goes back to talking about widow oil. All we need to do is get an empty bottle and use that bottle to fill with our integrity, debts and burdens. It is all about what we need to improve for ourselves and this way we can stop the envy towards others and eliminate our mental health issues that we have going on. Quiet excellence builds undeniable authority. People trust what is steady. It means the same attitude on good days and bad days. It means to have the same integrity when supervised and unsupervised. It means having the same values under pressure. Consistency creates influence without force. We need to lead with emotional control. Volume replaces maturity. It means respond, do not react, stay calm in tense meetings, and answer questions without raising our voices. Calm presence shift rooms. We need to lead with service. Influence grows when we solve problems. As a man of God and bishop of this flock, I do not do a lot in the community before I ask. My resume is a long career focused resume that is getting longer each year because of my motivation

and commitment to volunteering in the community and at homeless shelters. I volunteered at Catholic Charities in Chicago, Grace Place, Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries, The City Mission, The Philly House. I was involved in helping people with disabilities in Chicago to make sure they have fairness with economic resources and opportunities. I was a member of Rainbow Push Coalition and National Action Network. My calling started when I was 15 years old in Chicago as a teacher aide because I had a gift to give back to the community to make a difference and provide change. I have lifted others publicly by helping the homeless in Southeast Michigan, Philadelphia, Cleveland, New York, Houston, Dallas, Atlanta and Louisville giving them the motivation that they needed to get out of homeless shelters to be back part of the economy with stability. Light does not make noise. It shines. Salt does not announce itself. Salt changes the atmosphere quietly. That is marketplace leadership. You do not have to be the loudest person in the room to be a leader in the room. Influence is not about volume. Influence is about value. Influence through character means your life speaks before your lips do. In the marketplace, tithes give authority. Character gives credibility. You can have a position and still lack influence. When you have character, influence follows you. Character is who you are when no one is watching. Character build trust capital. Trust is the currency into influence. You may have had people that came to you and ask the following questions:

1. Can I trust you?
2. Will you keep your word?
3. Will you stay steady under pressure?

Character creates quiet authority. It means that you do not have to announce yourself. When you show up, prepared, speak respectfully, keep commitments and take responsibility. People look for you. Influence through character looks like doing right when pressured to compromise, refusing gossip, managing money with integrity, treating people with dignity, and finishing what you start. Your consistency becomes a testimony. People may question your theology, but they cannot deny your integrity. God did not place us in jobs by accident. You are not at jobs to collect a paycheck. You are at job to change the atmosphere. Your greatest ministry may not be in this building. Your ministry could wear you work. If corruption increases when you enters a room, you are not acting like salt. You were not saved to blend in. You were saved to illuminate.

- How can I add value and preserve integrity in my marketplace role?
- Where can I shine the light in my workplace, community and industry.
- How to lead without being loud?
- What would happen if believers became salt in systems?
- What would happen if light enters industries?
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Light illuminates, guides and exposes truth. Our duty as christians and disciples is to share wisdom and insight to make informed choices and decisions. Turn to the person next to you and say stop leaning on your own understanding. Our duty as christians and disciples is to motivate and inspire others by introducing creative solutions. We must model transparency and accountability. A mentor who helps colleagues see opportunities or ethical alternatives they had not considered. The light illuminates around me as a man of God and ordained Bishop because I just need to get better at it. When I try to be truthful, I like to go around the bush to get the truth out and not just say it. We face challenges to bring salt and light in our life because we still want to depend on mammon, not live under God's covenant and his grace. We still see and hear people dealing with a society and community with people still relying on greed, compromise and competition. It is still seen and heard by people in the world still all about the fear factor. I believe 18-24 year olds still have the fear factor because they envy people that have more going on for them. 18-24 year olds are confidence-paralyzed and look at others' success and rise up as an

insult to themselves. You see people trying to better themselves and the information that people in the older generation tells them goes in one ear and out the other. That is 100% fact. We need to stay committed to prayer, accountability and aligning ourselves with God's word. I want to tell you a true story that you have pastors baptizing people at homeless shelters. I really believe that they do not explain to homeless men and women at homeless shelters beforehand that they do not educate them on what it means to be baptized. Baptized is like a repentance and starting to live obedience for Christ. You cannot be baptized and born again to still do the same worldly idolatry that they have been doing before baptized. I educate this flock and others as a man of God is not to be baptized and get born again until they are ready to live obedient to God with heavenly wisdom. People that are baptized should be living a transforming life to God. I was baptized and born again on September 4, 2011. Baptism is the death of our old life and rising in a new one. It is time to live with the fruit of spirit. People that want to continue to gossip, sin and temptation are just getting baptized for perfection. I need everyone in here to raise the hands of the people that are baptized and born again. You need to read and familiarize yourself with Romans 6:4 to give you an idea on how a baptized person should be living their life in Christ. I see people get baptized and still live the same life in sin, idolatry, temptation and abomination. People rather still live in the rubble and static after baptism. Baptism symbolizes a new beginning. It means we need to turn away from old patterns of previous sin, idolatry, temptation and abomination. After we are baptized, it is time for us to pursue growth, maturity and spiritual discipline. Another thing that people like Pastor John Johnson and other pastors told me in 2023 to the present is that I am spiritually disciplined as a man of God and Bishop. After we are baptized and born again, we need to let our lifestyle reflect our new identity in Christ. After you are baptized and born again, we must realize that we belong to Christ now and not the person we used to be. Baptism is an outward sign of obedience and obedience continues. We must follow God's word daily and make our decisions by heavenly wisdom, not leaning on our own understanding. We must have a vision known as a Godly vision while taking our christian walk towards the kingdom. It is time that we need to start making decisions by biblical and heavenly principles. We must submit to God's will even when it is uncomfortable. Obedience is not perfection. Obedience is direction. A baptism believer and born again christian grow in love, humility, forgiveness, integrity and self-control. Our attitude should make people see Christ in us. This congregation has baptized over 500 members and new members to transform their life over to God since 2014. Christian life is not solo. Christians and disciples must be active in church, build accountability relationships, and serve others faithfully. Faith deepens in fellowship. I am active in church, have brothers and sisters in residence that look out for me and serve as my accountability as a man of God like they do me. Baptism is not the finish line. It is the starting line. After we are baptized and born again, we are living a life under God's grace, covenant and vision on a mission. That mission is sharing testimonies openly and honestly, serving others and building our Barn known as our legacy blueprint, influencing people in the workplace and community, and being salt wherever God places you. Believers may stumble after baptism and be born again, but we must repent quickly, seek forgiveness and keep growing in Christ. The next baptism service will be on the second Sunday of next month.

It is our duty as christians and disciples to transform culture and workplace norms. It is our duty as christians and disciples to build trust and credibility with others. It is our duty as christians and disciples to open doors for ministry and spiritual impact. It is our duty as christians and disciples to reflect God's character to those who may never step in a church. We are called to make a difference wherever God places us. Identify one practical way to bring salt and one way to bring light this week. In Houston in 2023, Pastor John Johnson and others said I was gifted because I can think of good prayers for people on the top of my head. My spiritual gifts are shepherding, wisdom, knowledge, prophecy and exhortation. That's why this congregation grows too fast because some pastors and religious leaders always told me that I must be preaching the word of God the right way and we always had seating problems during weekly services and bible study services.

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for your word that we are called to be the salt and light of the world.

Thank you for placing us in the marketplace.

We ask you today for courage.

I ask you to give us boldness to stand for integrity when it is easier to compromise.

I ask you to give us strength to speak with truth and love.

Help us not to shrink back to fear and the fear factor.

We ask for wisdom.

Teach us how to navigate complex decisions.

Show us how to lead with fairness, humility and excellence.

Help us to add value wherever we go and to represent you well in every conversation, contract and collaboration.

Grant us discernment.

Help us recognize opportunities to shine your light.

Help us see where we can preserve what is good and correct what is broken.

Give us spiritual insight to know when to speak and when to listen.

I ask you to make us influential for the right reasons, not for ego, recognition.

Let our work glorify you.

Let our character reflect you.

Let our presence make a difference.

We surrender our gifts, careers, businesses and ambitions to you.

In Jesus name, Amen