

## **Be a Difference Maker for Christ** Matthew 5:13-16

### **Introduction:**

We are just over half-way through the year in which we are focusing on “Being the Hands of Jesus.”

Our studies have looked at the concepts of bearing fruit, also having and showing compassion.

Further studies have considered being the hands of Jesus in our families.

In the most recent digestions of God’s Word the focus has been on being the hands of Jesus in our community.

July 31<sup>st</sup> is another opportunity to serve our community.

Our community meal is a wonderful opportunity to influence our community.

How can we best be the hands of Jesus in our community?

Is there something we can do that will enhance our influence on our community?

What will make a difference?

### **I. Connect with God.**

2 Timothy 3:16 and 17 read, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Change occurs when we are taught, when we are reminded, when we are corrected, when we are trained.

God’s Word is profitable for change!

2 Peter 1:3 declares that Christ by “...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

God is the power to live a holy life.

His Son, Christ, has granted us everything pertaining to life and godliness, so we can live a holy life before God.

God is looking for that one who will be a difference maker.

In Ezekiel 22:30 God says, “I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.”

“God’s plan for reaching ungodly people and nations is still the same. He uses godly men and women to stand in the breaches in morality and spirituality and make the difference by calling the nation and individuals to repentance, faith, righteousness, and commitment to God in Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

The total disintegration of society was noted in Ezekiel 22 because God could find no one to build up the wall and stand in the gap for others—in other words, there was no difference maker.

People who are connected with God know the source of change (Psalm 19:7-11). [Read vv. 7-10]

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<sup>1</sup> Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 224.

The psalmist believed the Bible is “perfect” (v. 7), “sure or trustworthy” (v. 7), “right” (v. 8), “pure” (v. 8), “clean” (v. 9), and “true” (v. 9). He believed Scripture was “more desirable than gold” (v. 10) and “sweeter than honey” (v. 10).

Scripture was not an added detail to his life but something he returned to again and again to refine and redirect his heart.

We do not read the Bible as merely a religious exercise; We read the Bible because we believe it will change our lives. [Read Psalm 19:11]

To enhance our ability to influence others we must understand and **believe** that the power to make a difference is not found in us; it is found in God.

He makes a difference in us as we read His Word and apply it to our lives.

God is a difference maker so we must connect with God.

## **II. Let God work in you.**

One godly man or woman can make a dramatic difference, even in the darkest of circumstances, when than man or woman lets God work in him/her.

God—the difference maker—works to transform us.

When we set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2) our lives can “be transformed by the renewing of [our] mind, so that [we] may prove (judge to be right or commendable) what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

The difference is seen in the fruit we bear (Galatians 5:22-24).

Jesus put it this way: Matthew 5:13-16, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Since we are transformed, good fruit, salt, and light, we should make a difference in the situations we are in.

A little influence can go a long way.

Are we improving or worsening our situations?

Are we improving the Bible class, the worship service, the church’s outreach, and the church’s evangelism?

Are we improving the classroom, the workplace, the community, and the conversations we are in?

We are either building up or tearing down.

Our potential to be the greatest influence increases when we allow God to work in us.

## **III. Follow Jesus.**

One person CANNOT make a difference, alone; It takes TWO.

If you or I, alone, try to make a difference in this world neither of us will be successful.

If you or I will be all in...completely committed to Christ (who changed the world!), then any one of us can be a real influence for the betterment of this community.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”

To follow Jesus, we must desire to be better, deny ourselves, take up our suffering—whatever it cost to be the best for Him, and follow Jesus.

In following Jesus, we must willingly take on the role He has for us.

Most often that means we have to be a leader.

It is easier to choose good when good is presented first, when good is prevalent, and good is commended.

We must influence others with good before they get a chance to influence us with evil.

We must band together as Christians and help our brothers and sisters make good decisions.

We must encourage one another when tough decisions have been made.

At times, our role will not be that of a leader in the forefront, rather our role will be that of playing second fiddle. Aaron to Moses; Joshua to Moses; Silas, Timothy, Barnabas to Paul.

Followers of Jesus make a difference for Him when they fulfill their role.

Follow Jesus.

Be where your feet are and allow Jesus to work through you to make a difference in others.

#### **IV. Make disciples.**

Disciples of Jesus are to make disciples (Matthew 28:19 and 20).

Share your story of transformation. The story of Jesus is shared 4 times; the story of Paul 3 times; In Hebrews 11 the story of faith is repeated. Their stories give hope.

Hope is the reason behind great acts of kindness and good in this world; Hope can be given through the hardships you have faced.

What have you gone through that impacted you in any way?

What lessons did you learn?

How did you get through it?

What was healing like?

What have you accomplished since then?

The Bible is the story of God's love for His creation that gives everyone hope.

Your story is part of His story, so look to your story; you have everything you need to change the world—the power to change, the place of change, the path to change, and the purpose of change. Be a disciple who makes disciples.

Your story itself will make the world a better place.

You can share it however you want—a blog, an article, a video, an interview, a book, a speech, or just something you share between you and another person.

If you want to make a difference and influence others for good, start by seeing the value in your own story. Start by using what you have been through to change the world.

#### **Application:**

From the time we are small children we learn to follow the crowd if we want to be cool and successful.

As a Christian, we may ask, is it even possible to make a difference in the world when there are so many forces pulling us in all directions?

The resounding answer is “Yes!”

One of our greatest difference making measures is to call people away from all the directions that are pulling at them and teach them to follow the One direction of the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6)!

Notice Galatians 1:10, “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

If we are not difference makers, it is because we are not all in on Christ.

We want to serve Christ but find favor with men and please men.

We want to do too many things at once.

To make a difference we have to go against what everyone expects of us.

When Christians live according to the expectations of other Christians, we will be better than the world but less than difference makers.

Difference makers live according to the expectation of only one--Christ.

Are we willing to pull ourselves away from the distractions?

Are we willing to swim against the tide even if the current is made up of church people?

If the Bible directs us to act differently than those around us, will we follow the Bible or the people around us?

### **Conclusion:**

More and more people are calling for the church to somehow reclaim its place at the helm of societal change.

Change begins with you. Change begins with each one of us.

To make a difference for Christ, connect with God—the difference maker, through His Son by believing in them (Romans 10:17), repenting of sins (Acts 17:30), confessing Jesus as God’s Son (Matthew 10:32), and being baptized into Christ (Mark 16:16).

Live faithful to God and your commitment to Him, letting God work in you, to change you and through you to change others.

Follow Jesus.

Following Him will make a difference in your life.

When others follow you to Jesus, you will be a difference maker for Christ.

To make an eternal difference in the lives of people you must engage others with Gospel truth making them disciples—introduce them to Jesus, nurture them to maturity, and pray for them.

Share your story of how God has made a difference in your life.

Be patient and stay faithful, for change comes incrementally.

Stay encouraged. Christians have the Holy Spirit, prayer, and the truth of God's Word.

Remain “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

If you are not a Christian—a faithful, baptized disciple of Jesus—become one today.

If you are a Christian, be a difference maker for Christ!