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About the Author



Gregg Matte is the senior pastor of Houston's First Baptist Church. Under his leadership this historic church, founded in 1841, has moved to the cutting edge of ministry and has experienced tremendous growth, including the addition of four campuses in the greater Houston area.

Before going to Houston in 2004, Gregg founded Breakaway Ministries at Texas A&M University, the largest college Bible study in the nation. What started with twelve participants in his apartment grew to a weekly gathering of more than four thousand students each Tuesday night under his leadership. He continues to serve on Breakaway's board of directors.

Gregg is the author of *Finding God's Will* (2010), *I AM Changes Who i Am* (2012), and *Unstoppable Gospel* (2015). He has also written the Bible studies *The Highest Education: Becoming a Godly Man* and *Birds and Bees: A Conversation about God, Sex, and Sexuality*.

Gregg holds a bachelor's degree in marketing from Texas A&M and a master's degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In 2011 Gregg received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Mays Business School at Texas A&M. He was the first pastor to receive the honor in the award's history.

Gregg married Kelly in 1997. They have a son, Greyson (2001), and a daughter, Valerie (2008).

Introduction

When the rain falls, the church rises. And on Sunday, August 27, 2017, the rain began to fall. Hurricane Harvey began as a tropical wave in the Caribbean and grew into a tropical storm. By August 24, my birthday, it had become a hurricane. Not the gift I was looking for. On August 27–28 the city of Houston, where I live and pastor, received record rainfall of almost fifty inches. Entire counties in Texas were evacuated; airports were shut down for days; more than one hundred lives were lost; and thousands and thousands of homes, churches, offices, and schools were damaged, some completely destroyed.

In the aftermath of Harvey, my church served our community by mudding out more than one thousand homes; raising more than two million dollars in relief funds; receiving donations that turned thousands of square feet of our church into distribution centers; and hosting countless people from near and far who came to serve, help, pray, share good news, offer a cup of cold water, and bring relief. And that’s exactly what it takes. When the rain falls, the church rises. Together with Jesus we made a difference.

Being a difference maker doesn’t mean that you can fix all of the world’s problems, but that Christians, one at a time, motivated by the gospel, join together to do something. We can each make a little difference somewhere. And all those little differences combined make a big difference. They did in Houston, and they’re doing so all over the world.

This Bible study is my invitation to you to become a difference maker. I hope as you complete this material in group sessions and personal studies, you’ll realize that you’ve been called to make a difference for the kingdom of God and that you’ll live up this calling.

Throughout this study you’ll find a common refrain. I call it the Difference Maker’s Declaration. Our church recited this statement every Sunday during the year before Harvey hit; then we lived it more than ever. It’s simultaneously a prayer and a commitment. I’m inviting you now to say this prayer; to make this commitment; and as you journey through this study and through your life, to return to these words, knowing this is God’s calling for your life:

I was made for more than watching. I have a history-changing, difference-making, life-giving, Spirit-empowered legacy to leave. Jesus, I ask You to work deeply in me and clearly through me as I pray, give, and go in your love. I am a difference maker. In Jesus’ name, amen.

How to Get the Most from This Study

This Bible-study book includes six weeks of content for group and personal study.

Group Sessions

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the teaching of Pastor Gregg.

START. This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video teaching.

WATCH. This page includes key points from Pastor Gregg's video teaching.

DISCUSS. This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to Pastor Gregg's video teaching and to explore relevant Bible passages.

OVER THE NEXT WEEK. This section gives group members something to think about over the next week. At the beginning of the next group session, you'll discuss your experience responding to this idea during the week.

Personal Study

Each week provides three days of Bible study and learning activities for individual engagement between group sessions. The personal study revisits stories, Scriptures, and themes Pastor Gregg introduced in the videos so that participants can understand and apply them on a personal level. Each day of personal study ends by summarizing the main point of that lesson.

Tips for Leading a Small Group

Follow these guidelines to prepare for each group session.

Prayerfully Prepare

REVIEW. Review the weekly material and group questions ahead of time.

PRAY. Be intentional about praying for each person in the group.

Ask the Holy Spirit to work through you and the group discussion as you point to Jesus each week through God's Word.

Minimize Distractions

Create a comfortable environment. If group members are uncomfortable, they'll be distracted and therefore not engaged in the group experience. Plan ahead by considering these details: seating, temperature, lighting, food and drink, and general cleanliness.

At best, thoughtfulness and hospitality show guests and group members they're welcome and valued in whatever environment you choose to gather. Do everything in your ability to help people focus on what's most important: connecting with God, with the Bible, and with one another.

Encourage Discussion

A good small-group experience has the following characteristics.

INCLUDE OTHERS. Your goal is to foster a community in which people are welcome just as they are but encouraged to grow spiritually. Always be aware of opportunities to include any people who visit the group and to invite new people to join your group.

An inexpensive way to make first-time guests feel welcome or to invite someone to get involved is to give them their own copies of this Bible-study book.

EVERYONE PARTICIPATES. Encourage everyone to ask questions, share responses, or read aloud.

NO ONE DOMINATES—NOT EVEN THE LEADER. Be sure that your time speaking as a leader takes up less than half of your time together as a group. Politely guide discussion if anyone dominates.

NOBODY IS RUSHED THROUGH QUESTIONS. Don't feel that a moment of silence is a bad thing. People often need time to think about their responses to questions they've just heard or to gain courage to share what God is stirring in their hearts.

INPUT IS AFFIRMED AND FOLLOWED UP. Make sure you point out something true or helpful in a response. Don't just move on. Build community with follow-up questions, asking how other people have had similar experiences or how a truth has shaped their understanding of God and the Scripture you're studying. People are less likely to speak up if they fear that you don't actually want to hear their answers or that you're looking for only a certain answer.

GOD AND HIS WORD ARE CENTRAL. Opinions and experiences can be helpful, but God has given us the truth. Trust God's Word to be the authority and God's Spirit to work in people's lives. You can't change anyone, but God can. Continually point people to the Word and to active steps of faith.

Keep Connecting

Think of ways to connect with group members during the week. Participation during the group session is always improved when members spend time connecting with one another outside the group sessions. The more people are comfortable with and involved in one another's lives, the more they'll look forward to being together. When people move beyond being friendly to truly being friends who form a community, they come to each session eager to engage instead of merely attending.

Encourage group members with thoughts, commitments, or questions from the session by connecting through these communication channels:

EMAILS

TEXTS

SOCIAL MEDIA

When possible, build deeper friendships by planning or spontaneously inviting group members to join you outside your regularly scheduled group time for activities like these:

MEALS

FUN ACTIVITIES

PROJECTS AROUND YOUR HOME, CHURCH, OR COMMUNITY



Week 1

The Definition of a Difference Maker

Start

Welcome to group session 1 of Difference Makers. Use these questions to begin the session.

Who are some people who've made a difference in the world?

All of us crave to make a difference in the world. All of us want to live with impact and purpose. Today we begin a six-week journey to examine what it means to be a difference maker. Yet when we actually think about making a difference, few of us know where to begin. We allow uncertainty or insecurity to lead to inaction, but the Lord will give us everything we need to make a difference. However, before God is able to make a difference through us, He needs to make a difference in us.

Have you ever thought of yourself as someone who can make a difference in the world? Why or why not?

Before beginning this study, turn to page 126 and complete the section "Here and Now." Ask a few people to share what they hope to gain from the study.

Let's begin our journey together by looking at what it means to be a difference maker.

Ask someone to pray for our time together. Then watch the video teaching.

Watch

Use the following statements to follow along as you watch video session 1.

A difference maker is someone who has the courage to step out and to live with impact and purpose.

A Difference Maker's Declaration

I was made for more than watching. I have a history-changing, difference-making, life-giving, Spirit-empowered legacy to leave. Jesus, I ask You to work deeply in me and clearly through me as I pray, give, and go in Your love. I am a difference maker. In Jesus' name, amen.

God wants to make a difference in us before He makes a difference through us.

People want to make a difference, but they want to do it on their terms.

God never shows us a big problem without giving us a big answer.

Three Steps on Our Journey as a Difference Maker

1. Stop doing evil.
2. Start doing good.
3. Trust the cleansing power of Christ.

God loves bad odds.

It's hard for people who are used to being seated to stand up and actually serve.

Discuss

Use these questions to discuss the video teaching.

Read Isaiah 1:2-4.

God's words in Isaiah 1 were addressed to the people of Israel. In what ways was their culture similar to the one you live in?

What big problem did Pastor Gregg identify in these verses? How does this problem keep us from making a difference?

The Book of Isaiah was written about 700 BC, yet its message continues to be relevant today. The book begins with a big problem. Do you see what had happened? God had done everything for Israel, raising them like children, giving them food, and providing them with blessings. But they had turned their backs on God. They had said they didn't want to understand God or follow Him. Israel wanted to forge their own path, and so do we. A spirit of willfulness creates a problem for us because we can be difference makers only after God makes a difference in us; He has to work in us before He can work through us.

The good news is that God never gives us a big problem without giving us a big answer.

Read Isaiah 1:16-18.

Pastor Gregg identified three steps to begin making a difference: stop doing evil, start doing good, and trust the cleansing power of Christ. Where do you see those steps in these verses?

Why did Pastor Gregg call verse 17 the difference-maker verse?

What's one area of your life in which you need to trust and rely on the cleansing power of Christ?

Thankfully, God provides a big answer to our big problem. Sin is always the problem. Rightly relating to God is always the answer. God doesn't leave us where He finds us. He calls us to recognize our sin, pursue the good work that Christ has called us to, and trust Jesus for ongoing growth. Making a difference isn't about what we can do for God; it's about what God is doing through us.

Difference Makers

Pastor Gregg shared a testimony of ways God has made a difference in His life. Ask a few people to share ways God has made and is continuing to make a difference in their lives.

God loves to work in our lives. Maybe you have a testimony like Pastor Gregg's, or maybe yours is a little more tame. What you need to see is that God works in your life so that He will receive the ultimate glory and acclaim. When you commit to making a difference, it's so that you can display God's heart to the world. Before we met Jesus, all of us were people with bad odds. God loves to take people with bad odds and turn them into people who change the world for the better.

Read Matthew 9:1-8.

Jesus made an immediate difference in this man's life. He gave Him the courage to stand up and walk. The people who observed were awestruck. Why should the work Jesus has done in our lives motivate us to move forward in faith?

Why do we allow fear to keep us from living by faith? What fears are holding you back?

After being healed, the man on the mat didn't make a big show of himself. These verses don't say everyone stood around and applauded him for learning how to walk and jump and dance. They didn't form a circle and start clapping for him to cheer him on. They gave glory to God, who through his Son, Jesus, healed the man. The people were awed not by the healing but by the Healer. Difference makers define themselves by their relationships with Jesus.

PRAY

Close the session with prayer. Remind everyone to complete the following personal studies before the next group session.

Lord Jesus, we want to be people of impact and purpose who make Your kingdom known far and wide. As we begin this study together, we ask you to work in our hearts and through our lives so that we can make a lasting difference in the world around us.

OVER THE NEXT WEEK

This week you were introduced to the difference maker's declaration for the first time. We'll return to this statement each week and take a closer look at one phrase to put into practice over the next week.

A DIFFERENCE MAKER'S DECLARATION

I was made for more than watching.

I have a history-changing, difference-making, life-giving, Spirit-empowered legacy to leave.

Jesus, I ask You to work deeply in me and clearly through me as I pray, give, and go in Your love.

I am a difference maker. In Jesus' name, amen.

The difference maker's declaration begins with a foundational statement: "I was made for more than watching." At some point we have to stop watching and get in the game. We all have the potential to be difference makers. Making a difference begins when we take hold of the work God is already doing in our hearts. One way we can do this is simply to share with an unbeliever what God is doing in our lives. You don't need to memorize a multipoint gospel presentation. Just share your story with someone.

When was most recent time you shared the story of God's work in your life with another person? Whom will you tell this week? Record how that conversation goes.

Personal Study 1

God Works in Our Hearts

The leading cause of death in the United States is heart disease. In 2015 633,842 American lives ended as a result of heart disease, almost a quarter of total deaths that year.¹ Steven Houser, the president of the American Heart Association, believes “the future of cardiovascular research is to stop the disease before it starts.”² Perhaps this goal explains the increasingly common labeling of various foods as heart-healthy. Salmon, almonds, blueberries, coffee, dark chocolate—all of these are applauded as heart-healthy foods and are recommended to include in our diets.

As serious as these heart-health issues are in our society, you and I come into the world with a heart problem that can't be prevented. Ever since the first human beings, Adam and Eve, sinned, we've all entered this world with hard hearts. Instead of loving God and loving our neighbors, we love ourselves most of all. Instead of worshiping God and honoring Him as Lord, we try to kick Him off the throne and take it for ourselves. And because of this heart problem, we come into this world as God's enemies. It's not His fault; we're the ones who sin. And we make ourselves His enemies because of our sin.

What does the condition of our hearts have to do with being difference makers? You see, before you and I can be difference makers, a difference must be made in us. We need our unhealthy hearts to be replaced with healthy hearts.

When did you first become aware of the problem in your heart?

Where do you see this heart problem in the world around you?

An Old Testament Answer

The Old Testament Book of Isaiah was written by the prophet Isaiah between the years 740 and 700 BC. The book has one major theme: trust God. In the Old Testament Isaiah was a difference maker in the highest degree.

Read Isaiah 1:1-15.

Isaiah was writing to people with hard hearts. They had a heart problem. They trusted in anything and everything before they trusted in God. They trusted in their kings and their military. Then when that strategy failed, they tried to make alliances with other nations so that they could trust in those kings and armies. They trusted in their external religion to keep God off their backs. But meanwhile Isaiah was speaking to their hearts, trying to help them understand that their greatest need was to trust in God.

How do these verses describe the people of Israel? How did God respond to their rebellion and sin?

Isaiah painted a bleak picture of rebellion against God. Through Isaiah God said His children had “rebelled against [Him]” (v. 2). He called them a “sinful nation” and a people “weighed down with iniquity” (v. 4). As a result, God had made their land “desolate” (v. 7). He rejected their offerings and hated their festivals (see vv. 11-14); He stopped listening to their prayers (see v. 15). The Bible tells us that before we can make a difference in the world, a difference has to be made in us. But how? What can be done? The words of Isaiah give a clear outline.

Stop Doing Evil

Read Isaiah 1:16-18.

First Isaiah told the Israelites to stop sinning. Stop doing evil. Coming through loud and clear, Isaiah! Verse 16 says, “Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your evil deeds from my sight. Stop doing evil.” When it comes down to it, sin is always the problem. And God is serious about sin. Why? Because He’s holy.

Have you ever considered God’s holiness? Why should God’s holiness concern you?

Difference Makers

To be holy means to be distinct and set apart. There's no one like God. He's completely, uniquely holy, and all of His characteristics flow from His perfect holiness. In God's total otherness and His complete purity and perfection, He exercises all of His other characteristics. God is concerned about human sin because it's an affront to His holiness. Choosing evil is rejecting God, and rejecting God is never good for us. However, God doesn't just ask us to stop doing something bad. He always points us toward something better. All of God's commands are meant to lead us to life.

Why do we tend to look at God's commands as though God is trying to deny us something good rather than lead us to something better?

Start Doing Good

In verse 17 Isaiah told the Israelites not only to stop doing evil but also to start doing good. When we hear the command to do good, we immediately think, *I've got to go to church more. I've got to work really hard to be religious. I've got to make sacrifices for God so that I can please Him and get Him off my back.* But the Lord knew that response was coming.

Read Isaiah 1:12-13. Why would it be a mistake to equate doing good with religious activity? Why is religious activity our first response?

We pursue religious activity because it seems easy and achievable. Isaiah's point was that God isn't interested in our attempts to earn His favor. They can never be enough. We don't worship to get God off our backs; we worship because we love God. If we really love God, our devotion to Him will be evident in the way we love our neighbors.

In what ways are you trusting in religious activity to earn God's favor?

Rest in the Finished Work of Christ

Reread Isaiah 1:18. What does God promise to people who come to Him in faith?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. How does this exchange of our sins for God's goodness take place?

Seven hundred years before Jesus walked on earth, God promised His people that He would remove their sins from them, and they would become pure. How does this happen? Only by an exchange. Jesus came to trade places with us. He came and lived the life we failed to live and died the death we deserved to die so that we could be cleansed of our sin and enter a right relationship with God.

We can't stop doing evil and start doing good on our own. First our heart problem has to be fixed. Once that happens, God also enables us to do good. When God gives us new hearts, he gives us new affections. On the cross Jesus took on Himself the punishment for our sin, and He gave us His righteousness so that we're no longer enemies of God but sons and daughters of God. This is the difference God has to make in us before we can be difference makers in the world.



Make a difference today by admitting
your need for a Savior.

1. National Center for Health Statistics, *Health, United States, 2016: With Chartbook on Long-Term Trends in Health* (Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017), 49.
2. Steven Houser, as quoted in Aneri Pattani, "Rise in Heart-Disease Deaths Sends Experts Down New Paths," CNBC, December 22, 2016, <https://www.cnbc.com/2016/12/22/as-heart-disease-deaths-rise-health-experts-focus-on-prevention.html>.

Personal Study 2

God Works through His People

What our neighborhoods, our communities, our country, and the world need most is difference makers—agents sent by God to make a difference in a broken world. In personal study 1 we examined how God makes a difference in our hearts. Today we'll see how God makes a difference through our lives.

Blessed

Perhaps Jesus' most well-known teaching is the Sermon on the Mount. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus had been doing miracles and announcing the kingdom of God for four chapters. Then in chapter 5 He went up on a mountain and began to teach His hearers about what it means to follow Him. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus defines what it means to live a life that's consistent with the values of the coming kingdom. However, Jesus' definition of *blessing* wasn't what we may be inclined to think.

Have you ever heard someone say they're blessed? What do people usually mean when they say that?

What do you think it means to be blessed?

Read Matthew 5:3-11.

When we think of the blessed life, we think of health, wealth, and success. But Jesus' version is a little different. He said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit. ...
Blessed are those who mourn. ...
Blessed are the humble. ...
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. ...
Blessed are the merciful. ...
Blessed are the pure in heart. ...
Blessed are the peacemakers. ...
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness. ...
You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and
falsely say ever kind of evil against you because of me.

MATTHEW 5:3-11

In what ways does Jesus' teaching radically depart from what we think of as a blessed life?

As we saw in Isaiah, following Jesus begins when we admit our spiritual poverty. Being poor in spirit means our hearts have been changed by God. It means we've come to the place where we recognize that we can't do enough or be good enough. Only the poor in spirit realize they need God to save them. The remaining Beatitudes flow from the first. Being poor in spirit leads us to mourn over sin in the world, and mourning over sin leads us to live with humility as we become woefully aware of our limitations. Living life this way aligns us with God's heart. As God's heart becomes our heart, He's then able to make a difference through us.

As Jesus began to make a difference in your life, how did your thoughts, feelings, and desires change?

Whom do you know who embodies the kind of difference-making, blessed life described in the Beatitudes? What could you learn from their walk with the Lord?

Insults and persecution hardly seem like blessings to us. According to Jesus, we find true life when we're shaped by Jesus and the values of His kingdom rather than the values of our own kingdom. As His kingdom and His values shape our lives we become a blessing to others. When a whole bunch of people who follow Jesus embody these characteristics, they become really helpful to the world.

Salt and Light

Embracing the kingdom values that Jesus described enables His followers to live with impact and purpose. Jesus gave two analogies to explain how He expected His disciples to make a difference in the world. Check out what Jesus taught after the Beatitudes .

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

What do the metaphors of salt and light teach us about following Jesus?

What would the world miss if Christians neglected to fill it with salt and light?

We all have ideas about what it takes to make a difference in the world. Jesus taught that the world needs salt and light—salt to preserve and purify a broken culture, light to give sight to a spiritually blind world; to illuminate the need for Jesus; and to expose sin, evil, and darkness. Food without salt would be tasteless, and a room with no light would be useless. Jesus gave us His Spirit at the moment of salvation to empower us to live for Him. Difference makers heed the call to be salt and light, which is essentially a call to point others to Jesus. Difference makers point away from themselves and to Jesus.

The Definition of a Difference Maker

Jesus delivered this sermon to a group of people He expected to work together. What changes when we lock arms to be difference makers with other people?

The word translated “you” in the previous verses is a plural form. If you live in the South like me, you might say, “Y’all are the salt of the earth. Y’all are the light of the world.” The point is that being salt and light requires the community of believers. None of us, by ourselves, can be the salt and light we’re called to be. Only when we come together to make a difference can we have the greatest impact in the world.

Review the verses. Who receives glory when we seek to be salt and light? Why is this a good outcome?

Did you notice the last line? We serve as salt and light so that the world “may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (v. 16). We don’t make a difference to bring glory to ourselves. We do it to bring glory to God. When we embody kingdom values, as defined by Jesus’ teachings, and work together for Jesus’ kingdom purpose—to make Himself known and to help others see who He is—we become salt and light, we become good for the world, and God gets the glory.

It takes time to be salt and light in the world. What changes can you make in your routine this week to become more intentional in making Jesus known?



Make a difference today by being salt
and light where God has placed you.

Personal Study 3

God Works through His Word

This week we've seen that God can make a difference in our lives by changing our hearts. Next we saw that as God changes our hearts, He begins to work powerfully in our lives. Notice that in both steps, God is the One who does the heavy lifting. He has been making a difference through all of history. He desires to change the world more than you ever will. The good news is that He uses us to make a difference.

God uses His people to bring His will "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). We're here to tell others about Jesus and to lead the people around us to see the incalculable worth of our God. That task seems huge! How do we do it? It happens as we connect with God and live according to His purpose.

As we move into the world to make a difference, how do we stay connected to this history-shaping, world-changing God? The answer is so simple that it may surprise you: read the Bible. The God who changed our hearts continues to change our hearts through His Word.

What would you say is the main purpose of the Bible?

● Perfect Instruction

God has given His Scriptures to His people so that they can know Him. The Bible is a perfect testimony of who God is and what He's like. It "is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). Through His Word God has given us "everything required for life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). Some of the psalms are devoted to expressing the value of God's Word.

Read the following verses.

*The instruction of the LORD is perfect,
renewing one's life;
the testimony of the LORD is trustworthy,
making the inexperienced wise.
The precepts of the LORD are right,
making the heart glad;
the command of the LORD is radiant,
making the eyes light up.
The fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;
the ordinances of the LORD are reliable
and altogether righteous.
They are more desirable than gold—
than an abundance of pure gold;
and sweeter than honey
dripping from a honeycomb.
In addition, your servant is warned by them,
and in keeping them there is an abundant reward.*

PSALM 19:7-11

Psalm 19 begins by describing ways God has revealed Himself in creation (see vv. 1-6). However, in verse 7 the psalmist shifted from creation to God's decrees and commands in Scripture. When the psalmist used words like *instruction*, *testimony*, *precepts*, *command*, and *ordinances*, he was referring to the words of Scripture. Although creation is sufficient to give us an awareness of God, we need Scripture to tell us who He is.

Highlight all of the words the psalmist used to describe God's Word.

What did the psalmist say God's Word could do in a believer's life?

The psalmist believed the Bible is "perfect" (v. 7), "trustworthy" (v. 7), "radiant" (v. 8), "pure" (v. 9), and "reliable" (v. 9). He believed Scripture was "more desirable than gold" (v. 10) and "sweeter than honey" (v. 10). Scripture wasn't an added detail to his life but something

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he returned to again and again to refine and redirect his heart. We don't read the Bible as merely a religious exercise. We read the Bible because we believe it will change our lives.

How closely do your thoughts about Scripture match the psalmist's convictions? Do you believe the Bible will change your life?

Difference makers rely on God. How do the Scriptures teach us to continually rely on God?

When are you most tempted to believe you can make a difference on your own? Where do you see this message in your culture?

To be difference makers, first and foremost we have to understand and believe the power to make a difference isn't found in us; it's found in God. He makes a difference in us as we read His Word and apply it to our lives. Scripture has unique power because it communicates God's thoughts to us. It tells us who He is, what He's like, and how we're to relate to Him. Scripture has an authority we don't have. Going to the Bible puts us in contact with God. When we read the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, encourages us in our pursuit of the Lord, and changes us from the inside out. If we don't listen to God through His Word, we won't be the kind of people who make a difference.

Planting God's Word in Your Heart

Do you have a plan for reading God's Word? If so, how is God changing you as you read?

If you don't have a plan, use the following questions to establish one.

Where will you read God's Word?

When will you read God's Word?

Once you've established a time and a place, what will you read in Scripture?

There's nothing magical about setting a time and a place, but it's essential to make time for the priorities that are important to us. If we want to know God better, we need to make time to listen to Him through His Word. In our attempts to leave a history-changing, difference-making, life-giving, Spirit-empowered legacy, we must start here. If we don't have the Word of God, we have nothing, and our attempts to make a difference will end in failure because we'll be striving in our own strength instead of being transformed by God's work in our lives. Transformation happens as we read God's Word and commit to doing what it says.

We should read God's Word. We should submit to it. We should believe it. We should memorize it. We should meditate on it. We should come to know it so well that it permeates our hearts and minds, finds its way into our conversations, and forms the content of our prayers. We should start with the Word and pray to the Lord, "Father, confirm Your Word with Your Holy Spirit. Confirm Your word with Your people. Give us wise counsel from Your Word to move out in ministry. Help us, through Your Word, to be difference makers."

End today's lesson by reading Psalm 119. The longest chapter in the Bible, this psalm is all about the goodness of God's Word.

As you read, ask God to give you a desire to read His Word. Ask Him to make His Word a lamp for your feet and a light on your path.



Make a difference today by making time to hear from God through His Word.