

“MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH YOUR LIFE”

Luke 5:17-26

INTRODUCTION

1. Recently, I came across a few pieces of advice about life.

1) You need only two tools: WD-40 and duct tape. If it doesn’t move and it should, use the WD-40. If it moves and it shouldn’t, use the duct tape.

2) The five most essential for a healthy relationship are: “I apologize” and “You were right.”

3) When you make a mistake, make amends immediately. It’s easier to eat crow while it’s still warm.

4) If you woke up breathing, congratulations! You have another chance!

2. That’s another way of saying what you just saw in the video...*“Make a difference with your life today.”*

In fact. . .that’s great advice, isn’t it?

“Make a difference with your life for the sake of eternity.”

Eg. Many years ago, Helen Keller said,

“Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing.”

3. That’s especially true for somebody who has a relationship with God. When you decide to become a believer in Jesus Christ, God wants you to make a difference with your life for Him. He wants you to introduce others to Him.

Eg. Everybody in this room is here today because somebody cared about you. Some of you have yet to begin a relationship with God. Others of you began that relationship with God recently or many years ago.

4. Did you know God is in the “life changing business?” Yet, many people go through life without ever knowing that God loves them or cares about them or that they can experience God’s forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

Eg. I read this week that only 11% of the people in the world know Jesus Christ. The vast majority go through life without understanding that God has fully paid for our forgiveness through the death of Christ, if we’ll just accept it.

God has given every one of us the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people around us. Today, we want to learn how to do that more effectively. There is a wonderful story in the Bible that teaches us this principle. It’s found in the 5th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. If you have a copy of the Bible, why don’t you turn with me to that story?

In fact, this story is so important it’s also included in Matthew 9 and Mark 2. In this story, we discover 7 principles that will enable us to make a difference in the life of somebody else. Let’s pick up the story in verse 17:

"One day as He was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for Him to heal the sick.

Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven.'

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, 'Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy?

... Who can forgive sins but God alone?' Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, 'Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.... He said to the paralyzed man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.'

Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, 'We have seen remarkable things today'"
(Luke 5:17-26).

What an amazing story! Now, from this story, I want you to see these 7 principles that will help each of us make a difference in the life of somebody else.

First of all, I must realize that...

PRINCIPLE #1 – COMPASSION IS INVOLVED

Did you notice first of all, these guys demonstrated compassion for their hurting friend? If my life is going to make a difference in somebody else's life, that's the first quality I've got to demonstrate.

Paul said it like this to the Corinthians:

"If ... (I) have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal." (1 Corinthians 13:1)

It doesn't matter how many awards I have or how much I accomplish in life, if I don't have love...it doesn't matter.

You've heard somebody say, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." If you're going to make a difference in somebody else's life, they have to know you love them.

Eg. This week I received a letter from one of the women in our church who is trying to make sense out of some of the things in her life. She wrote these words: "I think it's about love. Love Jesus. Love your neighbor. Love never fails." She's exactly right!

Paul wrote these words to the Corinthians:

“Don’t be concerned for your own good but for the good of others.” (1 Corinthians 10:24, NLT)

The number one reason many of us never have much impact in the lives of others is because we’re just preoccupied. We’re too busy. We’re concerned about our problems, our plans, our goals and our ambitions. We’re just too preoccupied.

The reason God used these four guys is because they loved their friend. They weren’t too pre-occupied with their own lives.

Do you know what happens when we really have compassion for somebody else? We’ll be aware of their needs.

Somebody said it like this: “When you really care, it always leads to prayer!”

Before you can make a difference in the life of someone, you need to pray. First...

- Pray for an opportunity

Just pray, “God give me a natural opportunity to tell somebody about You and invite them to church.” God will give you that opportunity, if you’ll pray. And then...

- Pray for an open heart

Did you know that when somebody has a closed heart to spiritual things it’s usually because they’ve been hurt? So pray that God opens their heart.

Make a prayer list of people that don’t have a relationship with God. I invite you to write down the names of at least one family member and one friend and one contact you have at work and one neighbor and one person you know in this community who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus. If you care, it will lead to prayer. And I’m going to ask you to use this card to pray for your family and friends and colleagues and neighbors and contacts over the next two months as we head into the holidays. The first principle I have to understand is that compassion is involved. The second principle is...

PRINCIPLE #2 – CONCERN IS INVOLVED

Did you notice verse 20? It says:

“When Jesus saw their faith...” Luke 5:20a

In other words, Jesus saw the faith of the friends of the guy who was paralyzed. He may not have had a lot of faith, but they did!

Have you ever considered what paralyzes people today? Some people are paralyzed by fear. Others are paralyzed by guilt. Some are paralyzed by resentment. Others by loneliness or grief.

Do you know what? Your faith can bring those people to Jesus. I don’t know how this works completely, but God wants to use our faith to help others find Him!

Folks, there is a spiritual battle for every person you know...and God can use your faith to help people in your world find Him.

It doesn’t make any difference how hopeless somebody appears. Have you ever thought, “Never in a bazillion years will this person ever step in the doors of a church.” I want you to know that nobody is hopeless! Look at these words in Hebrews:

“He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him.” (Hebrews 7:25a)

Nobody is hopeless.

One of the women in our church just lost her husband. The other night she was telling me about how she shared Christ with him for years. He never made a commitment to Jesus of any kind. . . and never showed much spiritual interest.

But, just a few days before he died, he gave his life to Christ. She’s going to see him in Heaven one of these days.

There is nobody who’s hopeless. So here’s what I invite you to do...enlist the prayer support of at least one other person to pray with you for somebody on your prayer list.

Ask somebody else to pray for at least one of the people that you list on that little card.

If my life is going to make a difference for eternity, compassion is involved, concern is involved, and then...

PRINCIPLE #3 – CONSIDERATION IS INVOLVED

Look at these words in verse 18:

“Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.” (Luke 5:18)

The paralyzed man couldn’t come to Jesus on his own. Somebody had to bring him. That’s exactly what these guys did. They devised a plan and brought the man to Jesus.

That’s the pattern we need to follow. Paul says it like this to the Colossians:

“Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.” (Colossians 4:5)

Over the next two months, we’ll have all kinds of opportunities for you to invite a guest to join you for some event or special service here at Grace. This weekend, you can invite friends to come to our International Fun Fest on Saturday night.

You may not have a lot of children in your life or neighborhood, but you can volunteer to help in some way Saturday night. In fact we still need 70 volunteers to assist in the efforts for the Fun Fest.

Or gals, you might want to invite somebody to come with you to the Holiday Extravaganza on November 9th or 10th. This is an incredible opportunity to give somebody the privilege of hearing the story of Christmas in a new way.

During the Christmas season, we’ll have special concerts and services and Christmas Eve services. You can use any of these events as target events to invite a guest to come with you. Just consider the plan God wants

you to develop to make a difference in the life of somebody else.

So on this little card I want to invite you to decide on the target event where you’ll invite guests to come along with you. And then there is a fourth principle if I’m going to make a difference with my life...

PRINCIPLE #4 – CONSISTENCY IS INVOLVED

Folks, if a person doesn’t respond right away, don’t get discouraged.

When these guys brought their friend to Jesus, they couldn’t even get in the house. Talk about discouraging! They might have thought, “We’ve brought our friend this close, and we can’t even get in the room.” But they refused to quit.

I love what Paul wrote to the Galatians:

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)

You will eventually reap a harvest if you don’t quit. So keep loving, and keep praying, and keep inviting, and don’t get discouraged.

Peter said it like this in 2 Peter 3:9:

“God is patient, because He wants everyone to turn from sin and no one to be lost.” (2 Peter 3:9b, CEV)

Eg. I spent a few days this week with Pastor Lee Dice. Pastor Lee was diagnosed with Stage IV liver cancer this week. I talked to him in the hospital room following some

surgery. Do you know what he talked about? He talked about the people that he wants to contact who still don’t have a relationship with Jesus Christ after praying for them for years.

You see, it’s always too soon to give up. Here’s the action point...stay with it. Don’t quit.

There is a fifth principle I need to follow if I’m going to make a difference with my life. I must understand that...

PRINCIPLE #5 – CREATIVITY IS INVOLVED

I love this next phrase in verse 19...look at your outline:

“When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.” (Luke 5:19)

Imagine the noise and the mess these guys made. Jesus is speaking to a packed audience in this little house. All of a sudden there is noise overhead. These guys are tearing the tiles off the top of the house. You talk about creativity!

I want to ask you something...have you ever gone through the roof for somebody? Have you ever gone out of your way to be creative to help introduce somebody to a relationship with God? I love what Hebrews says:

“Let’s see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out...” (Hebrews 10:24, Msg.)

There are all kinds of ways to be creative...so plan an innovative way to reach out to your friends.

Eg. If you’re looking for creative ideas, I recommend you register for “The Way of the Master” training sessions.

That leads us to Step 3 on this little card. Determine some creative ways to reach your friends. Maybe it’s a game night or a dessert night or a movie night or a barbecue. Just do something creative to connect with people in your life who don’t have a relationship with God yet.

If I’m going to make a difference with my life compassion is involved, concern is involved, consideration is involved, consistency is involved, creativity is involved, and...

PRINCIPLE #6 – COOPERATION IS INVOLVED

Look at the last part of verse 19:

They...lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

(Luke 5:19)

This is not a bad joke. How many people does it take to let a guy down on a blanket? It takes four, doesn’t it? What happens if only three do it? The guy falls off the blanket in that one corner!

Sometimes, it takes a group of people to help someone find a relationship with Jesus.

That’s one of the advantages about our church. We have a wonderful opportunity to bring collective influence in the lives of people all around us. You can invite a guest to come with you to a service. There is spiritual power in that.

It takes cooperation.

Now in Mark’s Gospel, we learn that there were four guys who took this paralyzed man to Jesus. Somebody suggested we call this message, “Four of a Kind Beats a Full House.”

So here is the action point:

Invite a friend into your group. Invite a friend to come to one of your ABF community meetings. Invite a friend to come with you to your small group.

There is one final principle if I’m going to make a difference with my life for eternity and the life of somebody else. Compassion is involved. Concern is involved. Consideration is involved. Consistency is involved. Creativity is involved. Cooperation is involved. And...

PRINCIPLE #7 – COMMITMENT IS INVOLVED

Folks there is always a cost to do something worthwhile. Have you ever thought about who paid for the roof repair in this story? I think these guys said, “We don’t care what the costs are, we’ll take care of them in order to get this man to Jesus.”

There is always a cost in bringing others to Christ. It costs our time and our money and our energy and our effort.

Eg. Now I’m not much of a fisherman, but I’ve discovered something...fish don’t jump into the boat. My culture is different than their culture. I live with air, they live in water.

If you want to catch fish, you have to go where the fish are. You can’t put a sign on your boat that says: “Fish...just jump into the boat here.”

Eg. I'm told that the average fisherman never ventures more than a half a mile from a paved road because most people want to fish by convenience.

Eg. One of the men in our church brought us some delicious fish he caught the other day. You want to know something? It was obvious that man was willing to go where the fish were. He was willing to be inconvenienced a little bit because the fish were worth it.

Are you willing to be inconvenienced for the sake of somebody's eternal destiny? My only fear is that our church will become too comfortable so that we'll ultimately forget the reason we exist.

Eg. It was William Temple who once said,

"The church is the only society that exists for the benefit of the non members." Jesus said: "I didn't come to be served. I came to serve."

Paul writes these words to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 9:12:

"... We put up with everything ourselves so that we will not keep anyone from believing the Good News of Christ." (1 Corinthians 9:12b, NCV)

Eg. Many years ago a tent revival was held in a small town in North Carolina. Two boys from the town decided they would check things out.

They arrived a little late and realized that all the seats were taken. They started to walk away, when an usher said, "Wait a minute guys, I'll find you a seat." He went out of his way to help those boys find a seat.

After they were seated, those teenagers heard the story about Jesus Christ. They discovered that He died for our sin so that we could experience God's forgiveness. When the time came for commitment, they both gave their lives to Jesus Christ.

One of the boys was named Grady Wilson. The other . . . was Billy Graham.

Billy Graham came to faith because an usher was willing to be inconvenienced for a little bit.

Are you willing to do that? Here's the action point.

Would you choose to be inconvenienced for the sake of somebody who has yet to know God?

CONCLUSION

Did you ever think these four guys ever thought in their wildest imagine that 2,000 years ago on the other side of the world a group of Americans would be talking about them? No. They had no idea.

Here's the point. . .the greatest way to make a difference with your life is to bring people to Jesus.

Why don't you bow your head just for a minute? How would you answer this question...

Am I willing for God to use my life? Are you willing during this holiday season to help reach at least one person for Jesus Christ?

Would you pray something like this: "Father, I want you to use my life to help somebody find you. I believe nobody is hopeless. Give me a compassionate heart. I need to be consistent. Help me do whatever it takes so

that others find you. I’m willing to be uncomfortable...I’m willing to pay the cost so that others will have an eternal relationship with you.”