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Lesson 10

How Can I Make an Impact for Christ?

Introduction

Big Question:
How can we make an impact for Christ?

Since the beginning of time, the Lord has desired to use His people to make Himself known. You are no exception. The Creator of the cosmos wants you to be a channel of blessing. He wants to employ you in His kingdom purposes. Following Christ means fishing for people. Every member of the body should play a part in ministering so that the body might be built up.

Many have lost sight of these realities. Though they are involved in many religious things, they aren't personally used by the Lord to make an impact for Christ. Many assume pastors, missionaries, and ministers are the ones who are to be used by God for building the church. Writing in the late nineteenth century, J.C. Ryle said, "Most Christians are far too ready to leave everything to be done by their minister, and forget that the minister has only one body and one tongue, and cannot be everywhere, and do everything." If the church is going to shine the light of Jesus in twenty-first century society, she must reclaim the truth that all Christians have a part in the ministry of the church. The Lord wants to use each believer to make an impact for Christ.

Conversation Starter

What are some reasons you think many believers struggle to make an impact for Christ?

Transition

In this lesson, we will look at four ways a Christian can be used to make a difference for Jesus. One can make Christ known by using his or her witness, work, wealth, and words for the Great Commission.

1. My Witness. (1 Peter 2:12)

If you want to make a difference for Jesus, your lifestyle is the first place to start. God wants to use each of us as vessels to share His glory with a hopeless world, but He can't use dirty vessels. By His divine design, He intends to use His people to shine as lights for Him.

Key Scripture:

“Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits.” (1 Peter 2:12)

Peter spoke of this reality in one of his letters. Writing to believers who were facing cruel treatment from unbelievers, he said, “Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that when they slander you as evildoers, they will observe your good works and will glorify God on the day he visits” (1 Peter 2:12). The word translated “Gentiles” was one that was often used of non-Jews in Peter’s day. In time, it came to be a moniker for unbelievers – people who didn’t know the one, true God. It was used in the same way one might use the word “pagan” today.

Peter’s readers were facing harsh resistance from non-Christians. They were being unjustly slandered and ridiculed. Most first-century people in their situation would have handled their critics by seeking revenge. Getting even would have been the most common response. No one would have blamed Peter’s readers for lashing out, but the apostle encouraged a different response. Later in his letter, the apostle would hold Jesus up as an example, saying, “when he was insulted, he did not insult in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten but entrusted himself to the one who judges justly” (1 Peter 2:23).

Apply

Peter’s instruction shed light on how Christians should respond when they are criticized for their faith, but it also showed that holy conduct should be the first priority when attempting to make a difference for Christ. Even when being persecuted, a different and distinct lifestyle should be the first concern. The reason that many are not impressed with the gospel is that they are not impressed with God’s people. They see no difference in the way in which Christians live, so they conclude that there isn’t much to Christianity.

Illustrate

When my wife and I were engaged, we did what many engaged couples do – we went on a lot of dates. I’ll never forget an experience we had at one of our favorite eating spots. After sharing a meal, a man approached. An air of awkwardness grew as he hovered over our table. I was a bit nervous as he began to speak, but I was pleasantly surprised when I heard his words. Smiling, he said, “Love paints a beautiful picture, and you have painted it for us tonight.” Apparently the man had taken notice of the affection my soon-to-be wife and I had for one another. That experience reminds me of how the church ought to function. When we live lives that reflect the character of Christ, others will see a difference in us. A bright witness will compel others to follow Jesus. Distinct lifestyles are our most powerful evangelistic tool. If you want to make a difference for Christ, first commit to walk with Him so that you might provide a powerful witness for Him!

2. My Work. (2 Corinthians 5:18, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Peter 4:10-11)

In a lot of Christian circles, there is confusion about the work of ministry. Sometimes the work of the church is seen as the responsibility of the ministers. Many believers fall into the trap of what has often been called “the Super-Hired-Holy-Man Syndrome.” They develop a mindset that perceives pastors as being God’s sole means of expanding His kingdom. When reading Scripture, we discover that the role of the pastor is only unique in that pastors are called to simply lead the work of ministry. Every Christian has a part in making Christ known.

This reality is further highlighted in one of Paul’s letters to the first-century church at Corinth. When writing about the way in which believers had been saved, the apostle said, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new

creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Many Christians can quote that verse, and rightfully so. It is a good verse to memorize; however, it seems the verse that followed is often neglected to the detriment. After his grand pronouncement in 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul said, “Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). Notice from the apostle’s words, it is expected that everyone who has experienced reconciliation should play a part in leading others to experience the same reconciliation. To be reconciled means that you should work to invite others to be reconciled.

Key Scripture:

**“Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”
(2 Corinthians 5:18)**

Corinth had a problem with people elevating the roll of pastors and apostles to an unhealthy extreme (1 Corinthians 1:12). The church was guilty of making religious celebrities out of spiritual leaders. Worship and preaching had been replaced by a sideshow (1 Corinthians 14:26). Instead of approaching the body with a desire to use their spiritual gifts, many were attending in hopes of seeing a spectacle. The cult of personality had made the church neglect its mission. Individual members weren’t engaged in serving. Paul encouraged them to regain the proper perspective. He used the body metaphor to remind them that each member had a place in the work of the kingdom.

Apply

Paul’s teaching often needs to be heard by modern churches. It is easy for congregations to get stuck in the rut of religious activity. The priorities of the church can give way to personalities and spiritual growth can take a back seat to a spirit of entertainment. A weekly spectacle is often more important than true service.

To be used by Christ, be aware that the Lord wants you to work within His church. You are a part of the body and you have a function to fulfill. Study Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11. Discover your spiritual gift and start employing it for the glory of Christ in His church. Pray and ask God to use you. Remember, every member of the body has a function. There are no exceptions.

Illustrate

I was in college when I first heard teaching on this subject. Someone led me through a study on spiritual gifts. I came to understand that the Lord wanted to use me in His Great Commission. In time, I discerned that the Lord had equipped me to teach and lead within His body. Aware that His Spirit had empowered me to serve, I began helping in small ways. I still remember some of the first lessons I taught, and I recall my first forays into leading small ministries in the church. Without a doubt, I’ll never forget the first person who came to Christ because of my efforts. There is nothing like being used by the Lord to make a difference in this world!

Discussion

Have you discovered your spiritual gift? Are you using your gift to make a difference for Jesus?

3. My Wealth. (Matthew 25:14-30)

Our wealth is also important when it comes to witnessing. By divine design, the Lord intends for us to use our resources for kingdom advancement. He has blessed us with homes, food, cars, clothes, skills, abilities, and salaries for a reason. It is His desire for us to leverage such things for the glory of His name.

This reality is made abundantly clear through a story in Scripture known as “The Parable of the Talents.” The story appears in Matthew 25:14-30. Jesus shared it to highlight the importance of stewardship on the part of His

Key Scripture:

“For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.” (Matthew 25:29)

people. Stewardship is the act of one managing something one has been entrusted to manage. In Jesus’ day, the nation of Israel had failed to manage God’s truth and promises appropriately. Our Lord pronounced judgment on them. The story told of a “lazy servant” who was negligent to invest what his master had entrusted to him (Matthew 25:26). Jesus closed the parable saying, “For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him” (Matthew 25:29).

“The Parable of the Talents” stands as a lesson for all generations. The Lord wants us to do something with what He has given us. We should work diligently to leverage all of our time, talents, and treasures so that people might come to know Him. Inventory should be regularly taken to ensure that our money and material things are being used for His glory.

Apply

One sure way of investing in the kingdom is through financial giving. There are always a multitude of ministries, missionaries, and ministers who rely on charitable contributions.

Money isn’t the only means of leveraging your resources for the kingdom. You can also steward your material things for gospel impact. Make it a habit to regard your cars, clothes, home, tools, and possessions as a means for sharing Christ. When you regard yourself as a steward for Jesus, you’ll be more likely to be used by Him. Throughout your life, never forget that He has said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Illustrate

I’ve sought to put these things into practice. Every time I get paid, I give a percentage of my income to my local church. I also give a portion to missionaries who serve in an international context. The dollar amounts are outlined in a spreadsheet in which I keep my budget. In fact, my financial gifts to Christ’s kingdom are listed out as the first item in a list of my monthly bills. I want to make a difference for Christ, so I have made giving a priority. Do something similar. Have you developed a practice of using your resources to make an impact for Christ?

4. My Words. (1 Peter 3:15)

To be used by God to lead others to faith, we must ultimately use words at some point. Since the beginning of time, the Lord has used His Word to accomplish His purposes. Creation came into being by the utterances of His mouth (Genesis 1:3). One day time will come to an end by His spoken word as well (Revelation 19:15).

Shortly after creating the first man and woman, the Lord began speaking. He blessed Adam and Eve by talking to them and He gave them instructions and commands (Genesis 1:28). Without communication via phrases and sentences, humanity would not be able to properly relate to God. Mankind finds real life in listening to what God says (Genesis 2:16-17).

God uses His Word to bring life into being. Think about when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. How did He accomplish the feat? He simply spoke and the man came out of the tomb!

By God’s design, His Word is His means for experiencing His life. When it comes to our work in God’s kingdom, His Word has a powerful place as well. The Lord has called us to speak His truth so that others might be changed. He used Peter to tell us, “but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to

Key Scripture:

“but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” (1 Peter 3:15)

give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

Apply

When we speak God's Word, it has the power to convert souls. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16). Some would contend that we don't need to speak in order to minister to others. Sure, we can make a positive impression through the way we live, but communication of gospel concepts is necessary. One must grasp the precepts and principles of God's plan of salvation in order to be saved. If you want to follow Jesus and make a difference for Him, make it your aim to regularly share His truth with those who don't know Him.

The problem with many Christians is that they rarely share the gospel. Some would argue that fear is the number one reason others don't witness. I would say there is a lot of truth to that; however, I would also argue that our fear is often rooted in a lack of preparedness. Most don't witness because they don't know what to say.

Illustrate

I can relate to that struggle. For years, I was silent because I didn't have a good plan regarding what to say. Fortunately, someone shared a strategy that has greatly helped me.

It's called the three-minute testimony. There are three statements you need to prepare in order to use the three-minute testimony. Using one or two sentences describe what your life was like before Christ, how you met Christ, and what your life has been like since you met Christ.

I've been greatly helped by the three-minute testimony approach to sharing the gospel. The method isn't original with me, but I've personalized it and used it for personal witnessing. As I share, I like to weave in brief snippets of Scripture that reinforce my witness with God's Word. I've refined my testimony to the point that I'm able to share it rather quickly. I can give it within a couple minutes when talking to a waiter at a restaurant, meeting someone new in a store, or conversing with a friend. Do the work of preparing your testimony and start using it. Practice, practice, practice. You will get better at sharing the gospel, and the Lord will use your witness!

Follow Me Challenges

PERSONAL: Write out your story using these three questions.

- What was your life before you met Christ?
- How did you meet Christ?
- What has your life been like since you met Christ?

Then, ask a friend (perhaps a friend on your "My 5" list) to listen to your story.

PUBLIC: Participate in or invite folks to VBS at Tabernacle (June 7-11). Participate in, donate to, and/or host a Backyard VBS. More information can be found at tabernaclebaptist.org/vbs.

PRAYER: Pray for both Backyard and on-campus VBS and the kids who will attend.