

What does it take to really make a difference?

To make a difference is never simply about capability, platform, or personality, though each has its place. It is rooted far more deeply in who we are becoming and the choices we make when no one is watching. Making a difference begins when we recognise that our lives are not accidents of circumstance, but intentional callings shaped by God for a purpose beyond ourselves. Scripture reminds us again and again that God uses ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things, not because they are flawless but because they are willing. When David stepped into the valley to face Goliath, he did so not because he was the strongest but because he understood who he belonged to. That kind of surrendered courage lies at the centre of every life that truly leaves a mark.

From my experience, making a difference rarely comes through grand gestures. More often it is formed through faithfulness in the small things. Jesus frequently called His followers to simple acts of obedience that carried lasting significance: giving a cup of water, noticing those others overlooked, or listening with patience and compassion. In John 13, Jesus takes a towel and washes His disciples' feet—an action so unexpected and humble that it still defines our understanding of servant leadership. If the Son of God could kneel, then surely our own path toward influence begins in the same posture.

Why it matters is simple yet profound: because every life touches other lives, whether intentionally or not. We are constantly shaping the atmosphere around us—in our families, workplaces, and communities. Our choices either point people toward hope or away from it. Jesus taught that a small amount of yeast works through the whole batch of dough, just as a small light transforms the darkness. A life lived for God becomes a testimony that others can follow, even if we never see the full ripple effect. Making a difference matters because the world is in desperate need of people who reflect Christ's love in ways that are tangible, consistent and courageous.

Conviction gives strength; compassion gives reach. One without the other becomes either harsh or soft, but together they change lives. The early church held firm to truth while living out extraordinary grace. Acts 4:13 tells us that people were astonished not because the disciples were educated or powerful, but because they had been with Jesus. His presence shaped their character, and their character shaped their impact.

Another essential ingredient in making a difference is the slow formation of character. Proverbs 27:17 expresses this beautifully: "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." None of us becomes who we are alone. We are shaped through honest conversations, correction, encouragement, and challenge. Sometimes we grow through the people who walk closest with us, and sometimes we grow through situations that stretch our patience and test our resilience. Every moment of friction carries the potential to refine us if we allow it. And as we are sharpened, we in turn sharpen others, creating a legacy far greater than we might imagine.

Making a difference also demands clarity of desire. Psalm 27:4 focuses on one longing: “One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek.” Those who make a real impact often live with similar focus. They refuse to be distracted by noise or discouraged by slow progress. They choose lives shaped by calling rather than convenience, by prayer rather than pressure. When our deepest desire aligns with God’s heart, our actions begin to flow in ways that bless those around us. We become vessels through which God’s wisdom and hope can move.

In the end, making a difference is a way of living rather than a moment of achievement. It is the willingness to show up when stepping back would be easier, to forgive when resentment feels justified, to hope when circumstances argue otherwise. It is choosing daily to walk as Jesus walked, trusting that even small seeds of obedience can bear fruit in God’s timing. We may not see the full impact of our faithfulness, but God sees, and nothing offered to Him is wasted.

Questions

1. Who are the people who have been or are the greatest influence in your life? In what ways have they or do they influence you?
2. Proverbs 27:17 How are you being sharpened at the moment? In what ways are you sharpening others?
3. Psalm 27:4 If you were to ask the Lord for just one thing, what would it be? Commit to praying for this daily over the next week and share next week any answers to prayer.