



To Make A Difference, We Must Be Different

In the market place, everything is about being different. Automakers advertise the different features that make their cars distinctly different from the competitors. Clothing designers have a distinguishing style that makes each of them different. Sports teams wear different uniforms to set them apart from the other team.

In personal lives, most people want to be different. In discussions we speak of our achievements, degrees, awards and dreams, all in an attempt to set us apart as different from those around us. Just look at the fashion of the younger people, they dress in such a way to stand out from the normal crowd. One of the negative factors in selling homes today is a neighborhood where all the homes look alike – people want to be different.

So with all this emphasis on being different, I pose a couple questions:

1. *"Why do so many Christians not want to stand out?"*
2. *"Why do we want to be like the ones we are called to influence?"*

A few months ago, I had a great discussion with a couple of my pastor friends at Starbucks. The three of us were in agreement that if the church (now I mean the biblical church, not man's) is to impact this world, we must be willing to step out and be different and act like the church. Another friend says: *"If we want to see a book of Acts revival, we must start acting like the people/church of the book of acts."*

There is a terrible destructive myth in the arena of Christianity: in order to reach non-Christians effectively you must not be too different from them. If you are different

you will shock or scare them. Therefore, what has happened to churches is that they are no longer distinct from those they are trying to impact. They look, act and speak the same as the secular world. Being like the group you are trying to influence gives the appearance that you have nothing different to offer them.

This stands in clear contrast to the teachings of Jesus. We are told that we are the "salt of the earth" & "the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-16). Why? Because just a little will make a powerful difference. A little salt is a powerful influencer: just think how little it takes to change the taste of your food! A little light is powerful. In total darkness you strike a match and now it is not totally dark. If others are in the room they will look and gravitate to the light. Salt and light are different and they make a difference.

If we want to make a difference, we must be different. If we desire to impact this world with the Kingdom of Heaven, we must act or demonstrate our difference. Jesus' first message was *"repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Mt 3:2). The word *"repent"* means to change your thinking. The Lord's first message was **not** about going to heaven: it was about thinking different. It was about thinking from a Kingdom perspective. This transformed thinking would translate into Kingdom actions. If we think different we will be different, if we are different we will act different. If we are to make a difference we must be different.

Food for thought: Is your life distinctly different from those you are attempting to influence?