

Lutheran Women in Mission

Making a Difference by Gretchen Gebhardt

Opening

Sing "God of Grace and God of Glory" stanzas 1-2 (*LW* 398, *LBW* 415) or "Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty" (*LW* 198, *TLH* 1) or "Make Me a Servant" (*Jesus' People Sing*, pg. 53).



"Vote for me and I will make a difference in this state!" the would-be governor promised. He was indeed elected, and he did make a difference. The tax rate and unemployment went up; the number of teachers, police officers and fire fighters went down. His term made such a difference to the people in the state that he was not re-elected.

Change in itself is neither good nor bad. Each case must be individually evaluated. How would you like to change the world? What kind of a difference would you like to make in the lives of your family and friends?

Sin Makes a Difference

So if you want to do what is good, why don't you do it? Why isn't it easy for us to make changes in our lives and influence others in a positive way?

As Christians in the world we face a conflict with our sinful nature each day. How does Paul describe our dilemma in **Romans 7:18-20**?

Jesus Differs From All Others

Sin stains every part of our lives, and we are powerless to remove it. Good works, prayer and devotion to a "higher power" are useless if we do not have Christ as our Savior. Read the following verses and note the difference Jesus makes for us.

- **2 Corinthians 5:14-15**
- **Galatians 4:4-5**
- **1 Timothy 1:15**
- **1 John 1:7**
- **1 John 2:1-2**

What a Difference!

Saul wanted to make a difference. He wanted to stand up for God against those who were trying to change the world. Read **Acts 8:1-4**.

What was Saul's goal?

How did God use his actions to change the world for good?

Read the following verses and note how the actions of each person made a difference. How did God use their actions for good?

- **Genesis 45:4-8**
- **1 Samuel 17:45-47**
- **Daniel 3:13-18 and 28-30**

What conclusions can you draw about God's work in the lives of His people?

Is this true in your life also? Share with your group about the differences God has made in your life.

Forever Changed

When Saul was converted, God changed his name to Paul to show the great difference in him. Paul became a powerful missionary and advocate for change in the world. He made a difference. Read **Colossians 1:9-14**. What changes did Paul ask God to make in the lives of the people at Colossae?

How can you follow Paul's example?

How will this help you make the differences you mentioned earlier?

Closing

Sing "God of Grace and God of Glory" stanzas 3-4 (*LW* 398, *LBW* 415) or "Prayer of St. Francis" from *The Other Song Book* and then pray together:

Dear Jesus, You have changed me from sinner to saint. Use me to make a difference in the lives of those around me, always pointing them to You. In Your name, Amen.

Gretchen Gebhardt, a writer and volunteer teacher, is Bible Study Editor of Lutheran Woman's Quarterly. She lives in Seward, NE with her husband who is a retired pastor.