

How to Make a Difference
Lesson 5



Objectives

- To challenge students to focus on what is on the inside rather than the outside.
- To examine characteristics in Jesus' life that made a difference in others.
- To examine what characteristics we need in order to impact others.
- To commit to strive to see people as Jesus does.

Materials/Preparation

- Supplies for *Starting the Journey*:
 - Option 1—jar of baby food, candy bar, small wood block, tape, five-dollar bill, plastic sandwich bag
 - Option 2—a small box, a large box, wrapping paper, tape, ribbon, five-dollar bill, plastic bag with garbage sealed inside
- Bibles
- Chalkboard or dry erase board
- STW pledge cards (completed by students and extras)
- Index cards
- Week 5 student Devos

Starting the Journey (10 minutes)

Select one of the options below to show your students that what you see isn't always what you get:

Option 1

Prior to class take a candy bar, carefully open it at the seam, and remove the contents; in its place put a small wood block or other object the same size of the candy. Carefully reseal the wrapper. Also take a five-dollar bill and seal it in plastic. Place the bill inside a jar of dark-colored baby food, making sure that the bill cannot be seen from the outside. Put the lid back on the jar. Select a volunteer and tell this person that you have two gifts but you are only going to give out the one that he or she chooses. Show the candy bar and the baby food and let your volunteer choose (without touching the gifts). When the volunteer (hopefully!) chooses the candy bar, let him or her open it up. After the groans and moans of having a wood block instead of candy, reveal what was in the baby food jar. If the volunteer picks the baby food jar, don't panic; just jokingly say that your example has been destroyed, spoon-feed the baby food to the volunteer, and then move on to the transition statement.

Option 2: Before class take a small box, place a five-dollar bill in it, and wrap it like a present. Wrap it carelessly with the tape hanging off, the paper uneven, the ribbon off-center, and so forth—maybe even put some food stains on it. Also get some nasty (and fairly heavy) garbage and seal it tightly in a large plastic bag. Take a large box and wrap the bag of garbage beautifully and perfectly inside of it. Select a volunteer and tell this person that you have two gifts but you are only going to give out the one that he or she chooses. Show the small gift and the large gift; let your volunteer hold them and choose one. When the volunteer (hopefully!) chooses the larger gift, let him or her open it up. After the groans and moans of receiving a bag of garbage, reveal what was in the smaller gift. If the volunteer picks the smaller gift, don't panic; just jokingly say that your example has been destroyed, offer the garbage to the volunteer, and then move on to the transition statement.

Transition Statement: **We can't always judge something by looking on the outside. The same is true of people; the outside doesn't always show what is on the inside. Today we're going to explore some of the choices Jesus made when dealing with people.**

Gaining Speed (10 minutes)

Ask, **Have you ever been around someone who acted one way around certain people and another way around others—like a friend who said he or she would be there for you but then ignored you when someone else came around? How did that make you feel? Did you want to hang out with that person again?** Invite students to respond, without revealing the names of the offenders. You may want to interject a personal story if this has happened to you.

Say, **Being real around others is one of the primary ways to make a difference in someone's life.**

Down the Straightaway (20 minutes)

Explain that Jesus was a great example of being real in all situations; people always knew where he stood. Divide the class into groups of five or six and assign the following passages to each group:

- Matthew 9:9–13
- Luke 7:36–50
- Luke 19:1–9

Groups should discuss how these events might have gone down if they had happened in our time. Who are the comparable people Jesus would interact with today? What major themes run through each of these stories? If time permits, you may want to have each group choose one of the passages to place in a modern-day context and act out as a skit.

After a few minutes, bring the groups back together and invite them to report on what they found. Ask, **Why do you think Jesus was so concerned about what was on the inside of people—and so unconcerned about external things?** Jesus knew that what's on the inside will last; the external things will fade away.

Ask someone to read Matthew 23:27–28. Discuss the following questions:

- **Who was Jesus talking to here?** Pharisees, religious leaders.
- **Why was Jesus so tough on these people?** They looked good on the outside, but the inside was messed up.
- **What was Jesus trying to communicate here?** What's on the inside will come out—and it reveals who we truly are.

Ask students to think about the things on which people base their judgments about others in our society. Most of this basis is external—what people wear, how they look, what they can do for me. Now say, **Think about the things that Jesus saw—that he sees—as important when looking at a person.** This would include attitude, love or lack of love for others, and so forth. Don't let students just say "the heart" without delving into what that really means.

Heading for the Checkered Flag (15 minutes)

Say, **How many of you have a hard time looking at people for what is on the inside rather than the outside?** If we're honest, this would probably include each one of us. Divide the class into groups again and ask the groups to brainstorm ways that we can do better at looking at others through Jesus' eyes. After a few minutes, bring the groups back together and discuss their responses. Suggestions might include holding each other accountable during the week, trying to

get to know someone before drawing any conclusions, not stereotyping others, and so forth. Ask, **What would happen if all Christians really saw people for who they are on the inside rather than the outside? What would happen if that were true in our youth group?**

Over the last few weeks you have been talking together about what it means to give. You have challenged the students in your group to give financially to Spread the Word to make a difference by spreading the gospel around the world. At this time, collect any pledge cards that have not been turned in. If there are any new students or those who did not bring their cards back, make extras available; explain the cards briefly and ask that the cards be turned in before students leave. If you can tally the total of the pledges received, celebrate today with your students; if you need more time, be sure to announce the total and celebrate next week. And don't forget to send the funds raised to Spread the Word!

Say, STW is awesome, but making a difference also involves how we live daily, how we treat those around us. Today, our challenge is to see others through God's eyes—eyes that focus on those around us for what is inside and not what they look like on the outside.

Crossing the Finish Line (5 minutes)

Close the session in prayer, thanking God for the commitments that were made and asking him to give you and your students eyes to focus on the inside rather than the outside. If you wish, you can write (or ask students to write) the words of Colossians 3:17 on index cards and challenge them to memorize the passage.

Distribute the Week 5 Student Devos and challenge students to complete this simple handout over the coming week.