

5/14/2000

A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“The *Beginning* To Making A Difference”

“How can I make a difference?” is a question that I am asked more frequently than anyone would guess. And the declarative sentence, “I want to make a difference!” is the next of kin to the interrogative above. Both the question and the declaration are windows to a human impulse as ancient as history and as driving as instinct. *There is in each of us the desire for a different world, a world which is better.* This is a “longing” simply not present in the other forms of our planet’s life.

We want a better world. This desire is universal. It is embedded in the molecules of our minds. Our definitions may differ and our goals may be poles apart, so that there is no unanimity of what comprises “the good life,” or “a better world.” But there is no question that within the folds of the human spirit there resides this beating impetus to seek a newer world.

It is expressed to me weekly and most of the time daily in the six words of that question and that declaration. Five of those words have just one syllable. Yet they open to an ocean depth of fundamental need. *We need more than a better world, we deeply need to be a part of its realization.* Our well being is inextricably bound, not just to a whole world, we must be integrally involved in its healing! So, it is not enough to have a “fixed” city, unless each of us are “fixed” through meaning and purpose and dignity. And we won’t be “fixed” unless we are involved in the “fixing!”

Thus the question, “How can I make a difference?” is more often than not followed by the declaration, “I want to make a difference!” coming from the same lips. I must respond that there is a vast gulf between the words “*I want to,*” and “*I am willing to.*”

In my own life’s journey, it is now easy to look back and see that I spent years saying, “I *want* to make a difference.” I said it in a thousand different ways to myriad groups and individuals. I said it through my life decisions. I said it in my years of preparation. I said it and said it and said it. And not only was I *not* making a difference in the world, I **was not making a difference in me!!**

One of the great turning points of my life came when I read one of Bishop William Friend’s books in which a provocative thinker, Elinor Ford, wrote, “You cannot continue to hope for a new future, unless you are *willing to invest yourself in a new present.*” In other words you must begin *now* to live out the life which you had hoped will someday come about. **Willing!** This means that my mind, my emotions,

and my desires must be placed into the service of some future hope by dedicating them **today!** I work today for a future hope!

How many years did I *want* to make a difference, but I was just not *willing* to do what it took to do it! You see, it took a *daily present surrender* to that hope for the future. This became and becomes quite concrete in its demands. General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, put it best. “There are many men who have more brains than William Booth. There are many who have more strength. There are many men who have more heart and more savvy. But when I got the poor of London on my mind and saw a vision of what they could become. Then I said that God can have *all* of the brains, and *all* of the strength, and *all* of the heart, and *all* of the savvy that William Booth has.”

Those words define *willingness* in my book. We place ourselves, all of ourselves into the service of something bigger than ourselves. Here are the tests that you need you give yourself if you really *want* to make a difference. Ask yourself these questions: **“Can I state the meaning and purpose of my life in a simple and articulate way?”** For example, “I am here on planet earth to.....” **“Is the stated purpose of my life something that is bigger than me and serves others outside of myself and my own family?”** For example, “The Cause I serve helps others by....” **“Do I do measurable deeds daily to fulfill my purpose for living?”** For example, “Each day I am making a difference by doing this...” **“Can I demonstrate that I am not alone in my commitment to this purpose by showing that I am working with others to fulfill this purpose?”** For example, “The others I work with to fulfill my purpose and who hold me accountable are...”

Those questions helped me to move from a rather vacuous *wanting to make a difference* to an incredibly dynamic *willing to make a difference*. Because they anchored me in the rigorous test of the concrete foundation of *doing* rather than just *hoping*.

If you have found that you haven't exactly passed with flying colors, then let those questions burn deeply into your consciousness. Let them give you no rest. Wrestle. Sweat. Keep letting them work on you until you are aligned to the reason for which you have been born. Then you will discover the incredible freedom of moving from *wanting to willing!*

But there is more! Once you have been awakened through a new devotion there is a discipline that will give you a perspective that is altogether grand in its scope. Next month, I want to share, **“The Breakthrough To Making A Difference.”** What an adventure life is!!! It was meant to be great and that is just what we are seeing here at SBCR!! Come and join with us in making a difference.