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A PERSONAL WORD FOR YOU from Mack McCarter

“The *Breakthrough* To Making A Difference II”

“How can I make a difference?” is the key question one must ask if he or she is to find meaning and fulfillment in this life. Life itself imposes this query upon us and it is relentless in its pursuit of us. That is why I have given top shelf attention to this search for significance in the previous two issues of *Renewal News*. In those two columns we have seen that if we are to invest our lives in worthy causes which fill us with purpose and direction as well as the joy and adventure which life can bring, then we must first be *willing* to present ourselves daily to something outside of ourselves which can begin to use all of our capacity to serve. Then we said that we must go beyond this crucial first step of willingness to serve if indeed we are to actually make a difference in this world.

It was here that we saw that the true *breakthrough* in making a difference in our world comes when our *willingness to serve* leads us to a profound *willingness to submit* to the disciplines necessary to become both effective and efficient in our service. The amazing truth which David sang in Psalm 37: 10 & 11, and which was underlined by Jesus in the Beatitudes nine hundred years later is “...the *meek* shall inherit the earth.”

When we remember that the Greek word, *praos*, is the word translated “meek” in these biblical passages, we gain astonishing insight into an elemental truth. *Praos* means “trained,” “disciplined,” “power under harness,” so when a person begins to make a difference in this world, that person places himself or herself with personal devotion under the controlled cause of a higher claim. This submission leads to a magnificent breakthrough to making a difference in our world. But only by following a strict course does one gain that breakthrough.

Think of the way a musician must submit to limitations in order to be set free. Musical notes are mathematically precise. There is no whimsy that can conjure or create new notes. But by learning the scales until infused in the blood and bones, a musician can soar in creativity. First, submit to the narrowness of discipline until you are set free to be broad as any horizon.

How strange life is! If you would be broad then you must first be narrow. So it is true with making a difference in our world. You must submit to a strict discipline of steps that are just as rigorous as any scientific formula. I believe that the final breakthrough to making a difference is found precisely at this point. I believe that any person or group that would seek to make a difference in society must follow a five step process. I must also share with you that I use this process not only to insure the

viability of the work which we are doing here at Shreveport Bossier Community Renewal, but also as a measure of any work which is seeking societal change.

A great breakthrough in my own life came as a result of thinking through this process from step to step and then applying those five steps to our cause. If anyone seeks to change society, I believe that these steps are absolutely inescapable. So I implore you to use these steps as your discipline and your training if you truly want to make a difference. Let me put them in the form of questions.

First, if you want to make a difference, have you correctly *analyzed* the root problem or need that you seek to address? Pretend that we lived in a shoeless society. The root problem is not frostbite or cut feet, those are symptoms of the problem. We lack cover for our feet.

Second, if you want to make a difference, have you accurately *conceptualized* a solution to the root problem or need? You must **think** of an answer. Someone in the early dawn of human history actually **thought** of a shoe. (These first two steps are somewhat easy. You and I hear people all around us stating problems or needs and then answering these in the same breath. For example, "Drugs are a problem. We need to stop drugs." We all then pat ourselves on the back, but nothing is solved. It is the third step that is so critical to take. So)

Third, if you truly want to make a difference, have you concretely *actualized* a working model of the solution to the root problem or need? Someone, somewhere made a pair of shoes. Now as brilliant and as important as a working model is for the solution of a root problem or need, it is fundamentally useless for society as a whole unless the last two steps are taken. And I must tell you that these require enormous investments in thought and planning and resourcefulness to be fulfilled.

Fourth, if you want to make a difference in your society, have you effectively *standardized* the working model in order that many can be helped? It is not enough to make one pair of shoes, to help our shoeless society, we must find a way to produce millions of pairs. The process of standardization brings in its wake much tension to groups seeking to make a difference because it requires immense discipline. (Once the basic pattern for standardization is complete, it ushers in the possibility of endless variety. Just look in the shoeboxes in your closet and on the feet of your fellows!)

Fifth, if you really want to make a difference in your society, have you efficiently *mobilized* a delivery system in order to get the model to the millions? It simply does no good to produce millions of shoes if they remain in stuffed warehouses undelivered to the masses. So a method must be produced to see that the model is disseminated to those in need.

Do you really want to make a difference in this world? Then be *willing* to be *trained* in the *steps* necessary to harness your wonderful gifts in the service of others. It is simple. But far more simple than easy! In our next issue, I will share with you how SBCR is seeking to fulfill those five steps and how you can be apart of a movement that is making a difference.