

**Matthew 5:13-16** – No doubt about it – Christians make a difference. We are to be salt is to preserve what is good and enhance the environment in which they live. To be light is to draw people to what is pure and Christ. Something about us draws people’s attention from world and self and toward God.

But being such an influence can be challenging. We live in a very tasteless world, so preserving the flavor of good deeds is quite the challenge. We live in a world of immense and deepening darkness, so shining as a light will take some real super wattage to overcome it.

On the other hand, being a difference maker is actually easier than ever. With that much lack of taste out there, a little salt can really change the dish. And with that much darkness, even the smallest light draws the attention of those around it. So, this is important and needful and it was a good study.

Tonight I want to explore what you would do if you could truly change the world.

- 1) **8** year olds – if you were the POTUS, what would you do to change the world?
- 2) **16** year olds – if you were the King of America, how would you use that for God?
- 3) **20** year olds – if you ran this whole country, what changes would you make?
- 4) **26** year olds – if your word was followed by 350 million people, what would you tell them?
- 5) **39** year olds – you relinquished 30 years of power, what would you have been known for?

--- Sometimes we need to think BIG before we can think small. If I ran the country I'd "ban r-rated movies!" Okay great, so on your smaller life scale, don't go to them!--

Well, these numbers, while random looking, were not chosen at random. They are benchmark moments in the life of Judah’s most righteous king. After the kingdom split, and Israel went North and Judah stayed South, there wasn’t much to cheer about – a lot of tastelessness and darkness.

**8 Years Old** – (**II Chronicles 34:1-2**) – Not much is said of Josiah during these early years of reign. Only that “he did right in the sight of the LORD...” What I find most interesting is what you don’t see. I’m sure he made some childish growing mistakes. But you don’t read about him being disrespectful, mean or troublesome. He lived a focused spiritual life and started young.

**16 Years Old** – (**34:3**) – The record pauses at the age of 16 to identify a key moment in his life. For 8 years he has reigned and done fine. But now something stirs in him to seek God, to truly find out who this great Creator God is. Perhaps he read books or asked people he trusted. It was becoming real. He was building his own faith in God.

**20 Years Old** – (**34:3-7**) – The first major move Josiah makes is recorded here. He is 20 years old, his faith is deepening and he’s been making good choices. Now it is time to survey his surroundings and use his influence to make a real difference. He “purges” Judah of idols. They are torn down, burned and ground into dust. That’s awesome. That’s following through on claims to holiness!

**26 Years Old** – (**34:8-11**) – He is now 26 and has really done well to create an environment of integrity. But as his faith grows even more, he sees that changing the world is not just about “Avoiding Bad,” but also “Restoring Good,” so he gets the Temple back in order after years of it going dishonored.

**(34:14-16, 18-21)** – Can you imagine this moment? They found the Bible (first 5 books)! He heard it for the first time. He was able to measure up his life and others with what God had taught. It destroyed him. It saddened him. It put him on a mission to align everything with God! (**35:16-19**).

**39 Years Old** – (**II Kings 23:24-25**) – He lived a great life of faith and influence and godliness. His relationship with God’s law defined and built him. However, his life was cut short. In part, because he made an unwise decision to fight the right enemy at the wrong time; but more truthfully, because of the sins of his grandfather Manasseh, God was going to punish Judah no matter what. So, godly living didn’t mean long living, it didn’t mean there would be no sin or punishment – but it meant he used all the time God gave him, right up until the end being everything for God and his people that he could.

*Okay, cool. I see how Josiah served God faithfully all his life, but how exactly does the life of a Jewish king in any way lend itself to helping young people, or me, make good decisions today?*

## Making A Difference For God...

### 1) is Not About Your Age

- a. Growth and maturity and experience will shape how great you can be for God. But you can be good at any age, and should be good at any age. Age is not an excuse.
- b. Parents amen that. But sometimes they are the enablers... "He's just a kid/teen/boy." Stop that. We have great expectations and want them to know we believe in their faith today.

### 2) is Not About Your Family

- a. You might think Josiah had a great and godly home life. He did not. His father was an evil godless man. His grandfather was even worse (Mannasseh). Consequences of that man's sin even led to Josiah's death! He found God in his own heart and built his own faith.
- b. Whether your family are Christians or not, while a major factor, is not relevant to whether or not you make a difference for God – that, is all and totally up to you.

### 3) is Not Determined by Society

- a. Look at what Josiah was born into – his father and grandfather built a nation of godless, idol worshipping, temple ignoring, festival skipping heathens!!! How could Josiah do anything about that? By faith and personal conviction he affected all of those things.
- b. It's bad around here. From people around us to the things showered upon us in entertainment. Distractions about. But God's people can start in a tight circle and put away sin & embrace good & that circle can grow, no matter the influences around them.

### 4) is About Love for God

- a. Before Josiah even had the Law, he was godly. He sought God. He wanted to know Him and he came to love Him and serve Him. It was a relationship, a fellowship.
- b. Making a difference for the Lord is influenced by maturity level, family and who is around you. It is shaped by Bible study, but it is IN YOUR HEART to be His.

### 5) is About Time in the Book

- a. Josiah already sought and loved God. But then, he had the chance to read what mattered most to God. The gap between what was going on and what God wanted hurt Josiah. But he studied it and read it and had it read to the people. He drew close, not just to God, but the Word of God, and that's when he really made the biggest difference.  
*Faith doesn't depend on where you go to church, or parents, but relationship with God!*
- b. You can have a good family and love God, but without direction, we won't get far. Daily reading. Doing bible lessons. Talking about text. This is the substance of your love.

### 6) is About Choices you make Daily

- a. Josiah is not known because he sought God. He is not known because he read the Law. He is known because of the awesome things he chose to do – purge the land of idols, repair the temple, restore the Passover feast, lead other people to changes.
- b. How you **feel** – matters. What you **believe/know** – matters. What you know and how much of the Bible you can recall – matters. But what you **do**, every day choices you make, the words that come out of your mouth, the places you go, the life you live – that's how you change the world! *Show me yours without works and I'll show you my faith by my works!*

If this world were preserved and tasteful, your pure choices wouldn't make much of a splash. If the world was full of light, your Christ-like choices would often go unnoticed. But we don't live in a world like that. We live in a world where 8 year old kids curse like sailors, where 16 year olds are engaged in numerous immoral things. Where 20 year olds look out for number one over all others. Where 26 year olds are devoted to money and things and think little about God. Where people in their late 30's have created a legacy of faithlessness that will sadly hinder their children for generations to come.

But then there is you. God's salt. God's light. Young people like Josiah. Young adults of faith. A generation of holiness, making a difference, and maybe, just maybe, drawing others to the King. It always begins with ONE CHOICE – are you ready to make one tonight? -- **Matthew 5:13-16** --