

One Person Can Make All The Difference

by Doug Hamilton

Irena Sendler

At noon on May 15th, 2008, a funeral was held for a ninety-eight year old Catholic widow named Irena Sendler. Most people her age have a small funeral because of outliving most of their contemporaries, her funeral was packed with many, including a large number of Jews. She was being remembered not because she was rich, wealthy or famous. The reason why so many from all over the world came to her funeral was because she was a person made an impact on the lives of many thousand. She was one that made all the difference.

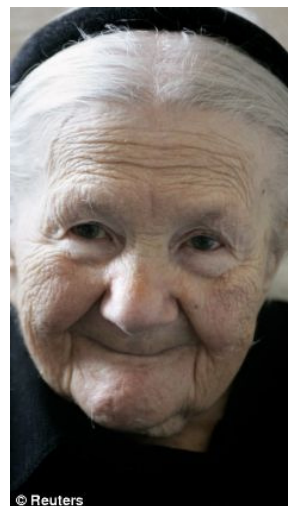


To better understand, it is important to focus on what the participants of the funeral service understood. Irena was born on February 15th, 1910 to Mr. and Mrs. Stan Krzyzanowska on the eastside of Warsaw, Poland. By the age of seven, her father died of Typhus, leaving her to be raised by her mother. Though she was a Catholic, by age ten her passion against the anti-Semitism that existed in the country was quite evident. She reflected later in life, "I was brought up to believe that a person must be rescued when drowning, regardless of religion and nationality."

This led her to be educated and employed as a social worker in the ghettos for the Polish Welfare Department. She headed this agency when the Germans invaded Poland in September 1939. As the persecution and murder of the Jews of Poland spread at the hands of the Nazis, she made the decision to make a difference. She secretly formed an underground group code-named *Zegota*, which was in reality the Council to Aid Jews. She was the head of the group and her cover name was Jolanta. The Nazis sent her into the Jewish Ghetto to head up the effort to contain the Typhus Epidemic that infested the area. What they did not know was that Irene and two dozen of her comrades had prepared to smuggle out Jewish babies from a certain death in the concentration camps.



The penalty for assisting Jews was punishable by death under Nazi law, but she did it anyway. Some of the babies were strapped underneath gurneys, in suitcases, medical bags and even a toolbox. The toughest part of her job was asking the Jewish parents in the Ghetto to give up their children. "Can you guarantee they will live?" she was asked by more than one agonized mother. "No, but if they stay here I guarantee that they will die," was her stock reply. "You shouldn't trust me. But what else can you do?"



Irena saved more than 2,500 Jewish babies and placed them with other Polish sympathizers. She kept detailed records in two jars buried near a fruit tree in order to reunite them with the parents after the war, many of which were killed in the gas chambers. When the Nazis discovered her cause, she was arrested and beaten, suffering broken feet and legs. She was about to be executed when members of her group paid off the executioner to allow her to go. She was reported as executed and

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went into hiding for the remainder of the war.

During the funeral ceremony, Teresa Kerner, one of the girls she had saved, now a doctor, recalled how Irena had helped her move several times to safe houses and then given her a home for two years at the end of the war. Many others that she helped also had great things to say.

In 1965, Israel awarded her the Righteous Among the Nation. She was in a wheel chair toward the end of her life courtesy of the wounds that were received at the hands of the Nazis. Her only regret was that she could not have saved more of these babies from the gas chamber.

The life of Irene Sendler is quite impressive because of her willingness to come to the aid of the most innocent of our society at such a time of ugliness of the world. She was one person that made all the difference for thousands.

The Title of the Two Part Series: "One Person Can Make All the Difference"

History is filled with individuals that made a difference in the lives of many. Some have been good influences and yet others have been to the negative. Then there is a large group of people in between that are not making nor are not seeking to be an effective influence in the lives of those around them. The focus of the lessons is three-fold.

- 1) Understanding the reality that a Christian is called to be a person that can make all the difference.
- 2) Understanding the qualities of a person that can make all the difference.
- 3) Taking possession of these facts and becoming that one person that can make the difference for those whom are in our lives.

I) We as Christians are called to be people making a difference in the world.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men."

- Life in the ancient world did not offer many of the luxuries we have today, including refrigeration. Many items such as fruit, wine and grains would do okay without it, but meat was not so. In light of this, people used to make various salt-based pastes to coat the meat since salt preserves it for a long period of time. The meat might take on a beef jerky flavor, but nobody would be getting sick over it.
 - This was such a valued commodity that Roman soldiers would actually receive some of the bonuses in salt.
 - The saying "This man is not worth his salt." came from a soldier not doing a good enough job to gain the bonus.
- But how does salt lose its savor or saltiness? Salt is salt, right?
 - Many times the salty past might be placed in earthen jars and stored for a long period of time. Depending on the elements within the clay, the salt could begin taking on different characteristics.

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- What started out as sodium chloride might become potassium chloride or magnesium chloride, hence changing the saltiness. It would lose its saltiness and corrupt the flavor and quality of the meat.
- What would happen to the unused portion of salt in the jar when the saltiness was lost?
 - Salt does another thing; it kills plants. People would dump the altered salt out on the grounds around the house or up on the upper patio roofs to stop the weeds. In this way the "savorless" salt would be trodden under foot by men.

Summary: Jesus wants His people to be salt on the meat for preservation of souls. Matthew 9:37-38 "*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. "Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."* Each of us have the obligation to be effective for Him, not to sit in a jar unused and becoming worthless. Luke 19:10 "*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" He wants us to be the light of the world so that we can show them the way out of the world. He believes that each of us can make all the difference in the world.

II) The qualities of those whom made a difference to the many.

The best way to understand the qualities of those whom made a difference is to simply examine some of the many who have already gone that route. We will look at a few of those in each lesson so we can cover more of them.

A) Joseph: "A person who dreams big can make all the difference."

- First Dream -Genesis 37:5-6 Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; ⁷ for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸ Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.
 - Joseph was one of the younger brothers of the children of Israel. Your status within the family was usually based on the birth order, which according to the record, Joseph was near the bottom, but he dreamed BIG!
- Second Dream -Genesis 37:9-11 Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ He related *it* to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying *in mind*.
 - He is at it again, not even knowing how such a thing would occur. They would bow down to him multiple times (Gen 42:6, 9; 43:26; 44:14), for he would end up being the prime minister of Egypt. He could have written off the dream off, but instead had it before him for more than three decades. He was a big dreamer.

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Some of the greatest influences in history had a dream. Some of these dreams nestled in the civil rights movement, some of them in ingenuity and business, some in politics, some in education. To be that one person whom can make all the difference in the world, we must have a dream set before us to pursue.

Application:

How do we gain such a dream? Does God just impart some prophetic dream to us like Joseph. Yes, but the dream is not and God has given all of us a dream to pursue once we have entered into covenant with Him at baptism.

- Our dream which God imparted to us is not about having the family of Jacob bowing down before us, but bowing down to God in glorification to Him.
 - Rev 4:10-11 All of heaven will "...fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever..." saying "Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."
- Our dream which God has imparted to us is not about going to Egypt for grain, but dining with God at His table in the heavenly realm.
 - Rev 19:9 Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' "
- Our dream which God imparted to us does not generate hate from brothers, but in unity with our brethren in heaven.
 - Rev 20:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

We have a heavenly Father Whom imparted a heavenly dream to unite us in the heavenly realm. If you or I ever want to be a person that can make all the difference to the world, then we must hold a powerful dream from a powerful God in powers out heart for the rest of our earthly lives. When we do, then it becomes contagious to others whom have yet to dream big themselves. Do you want to be someone whom can make a difference? Make sure you have the dream and it will likely come to fruition.

B) Jesus Christ: "A Person who is sacrificial can make all the difference."

There are many words that we could use to describe Jesus, like love, passionate and power. To me, the one word that best describes our Savior would have to be SACRIFICIAL.

Jesus sacrificed His time.

- Everywhere He went, crowds would throng Him to simply have a moment of His time.
 - When crowds were hungry, He took the time to feed them.
 - When people were hurting, He took the time to heal them.
 - When people were depressed, He took the time to encourage them.
 - When the people were ignorant, He took the time to educate them.

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Jesus sacrificed comfort.

- He sacrificed the earthly comforts for a life on the road. *Luke 9:58 Jesus said "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*
- He often was hungry (Mt 4:2).
- He was thirsty (John 19:28).
- He was lonely (Luke 22:42).

Jesus sacrificed His possessions.

- He was born a king in a manger and not a palace like other kings (Luke 2:7).
- He was not concerned about earthly wealth, but heavenly treasure (Mt 6:19).
- They even divided His meager possessions at the moment of crucifixion (Mk 15:24).
- He was sacrificial in every way with possessions of this earth

Jesus sacrificed His life.

- This is the basis of God's love for us.
 - John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."
- There is no greater love on earth.
 - John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."
- When we understand this love, then we can finally be someone whom can make a difference in the lives of many.
 - 1 John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Application:

Jesus was One whom made a difference in more lives than anyone else whom ever walked the earth. He has been gone 2,000 years, but resides in heaven and in the hearts of His followers even today. When we tap into His sacrificial life, then we will be sacrificial with our time, our comforts, our possession and our lives. If you want to be someone who can make a difference in the lives of many, then we must focus our minds on the sacrificial Savior Jesus Christ as our example.

Conclusion:

When we continue the second part of this lesson this evening, we will cover some more examples of people that made all the difference to others. We will learn more of these qualities that can make us into a people that make all the difference in the lives of others.

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Part 2: One Person Can Make All the Difference

Deep down inside we all want to know that we are making a positive influence on the world around us. We want to know that our life has a positive meaning and impact on the culture. This is not something that will occur by accident, but rather by certain qualities that are cultivated through Christ. Two of those qualities covered in part one was 1) People who dream big and people who are sacrificial can make all the difference in the lives around them. Now we will cover a few more qualities which are important.

Esther: "A person who capitalizes on their position can make all the difference."

- Esther was an orphan from a very young age.
- She was taken in to her cousin Mordecai's home and raised.
- She was beautiful in her appearance.
- She was chosen as a candidate for the Royal Harem of King Xerxes.
- She was chosen as Queen by Xerxes.
- Haman the Prime Minister for King Xerxes hated the Jewish people and wanted them all dead.
- He passed a decree that said all the Jews would have to be killed on the 25th of February.
- The Jews were left without any hope.
- Mordecai secretly send word to Queen Esther to do something.
- She sent word back that even the Queen has limitations.
- Mordecai sent another message which is the basis of this point.
 - Esther 4:13-14 "Do not imagine that you in the king's palace can escape any more than all the Jews. ¹⁴ "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place and you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?"
 - Mordecai is reminding her that God has placed her in a position of influence and that she can use her position to make a difference in the lives of many. What was the outcome of this?
- She was able to guide the events of history so that the people would be spared and the nation would thrive. By the end of this potential disaster Mordecai became the new Prime Minister and the Feast of Purim was in place.

Application:

God has placed each and every one of us in a position to influence others. When that person capitalizes on his or her position in life, they will make all the difference to the ones around them.

- To the CEOs of major companies, they can make the difference to all those in the company boards.
- To the athletes that made it big, they are in a position to make a difference to all those who watch the sport.
- To the politician who was elected, they are in a position to make all the difference in the lives of the electorate.

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- To the stay at home moms, they can make the difference to all those other stay at home moms struggling to do the best they can to raise the children.
- To the homeless man on the street, they can make all the difference to the other people they know from the street.

When we take the time to understand that God has put us in our position of life "for such a time as this", then we will be a person who can make all the difference in the world.

Daniel: "A person who morally stands out can make all the difference."

- Daniel was taken away to Babylon as a young man.
- He and his three friends were chosen to be in personal service to the king like thousands of others.
- Part of their three year education was to fatten up on forbidden meats and getting drunk with wine. It would have been easy to simply go along with the crowd, but this was extremely offensive to Daniel and his three friends.
 - Daniel 1:8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.
- The result was finding favor with God because they were doing what God commanded in the Law. At the end of the ten day test where they ate only vegetables, they were able to stand out above everyone else. They followed their morals and the results were great. They were able to be people that made all the difference during the captivity in the exile.

Application:

There are many times that the children of God are being asked to forsake their morality and go with the flow of the world. That is not our to make. We are to stand out from the world and in so doing we each can be a person that can make all the difference to a world of darkness. If however our morals are no better than the world, then what is the contrast? We lose all effectiveness and incentive to cause change in the hearts of those around us.

Josiah: "A person who seeks reform can make all the difference."

- Josiah was a boy king that came to power after the nation of Judah was practicing idolatry for decades.
- God had declared the nation would be destroyed as a result of this apostasy.
- Josiah had a heart for God and sought to restore the temple for starters.
- During the renovation they find an actual copy of the Law. Apparently they had been without one after decades of national immorality.
 - 2 Kings 22:11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes.
- Upon reading this book, King Josiah sparked a religious revival of the nation. He tore down altars to false gods, removed the Sodomites from the land and reinstated the Passover. He was seeking for reforms even as a young child, found the reforms as a young man and in the end sought to reform the nation. What was the result?

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- 2 Kings 22:19-20 "...because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the LORD. ²⁰ "Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil which I will bring on this place." ' ' "

Application:

- We ought also be reform seekers concerning our lives. We need to examine ourselves daily to see how better reform to God's plans for our lives. We need to wake up every morning and be prepared to be transformed through the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2). When we become like that, then we will be one whom can make all the difference to those others in our life. If we fail to do so, then we become a bad example to others. If you want to be a person that makes a difference, then be willing to seek reform.

Jonah: "A person who frequently adjusts can make all the difference."

Jonah was simply a man that God chose to take a message of repentance to the heathen nation of Assyria. It is in the document which bears his name do we find yet another quality of people wanting to make a difference in the lives of many.

- He was called by God to go to Nineveh and call for the nation to repent. This was not exactly a job he wanted because the Assyrians were hated in the Israel for all the evil they had done.
- He decided to take a ship in the opposite direction, traveling contrary from the plans of God.
- God caused a terrible storm on the Mediterranean, causing the crewmen to figure out who was being punished by God in this. Through the process of casting lots, Jonah was proven to be the one.
- He was cast out of the boat and swallow by a great fish. This fish vomited him on the shores of the nation he was fleeing from.
- Jonah preaches the message to the Ninevites, they repent and are spared for the time being. As a result Jonah laments the fact that God has spared them for another generation.
- God once again reaches out to Jonah to show him this was a good thing, not a bad thing.
 - In chapter one he was running from God, and a fish was sent.
 - In chapter two he was running to God in prayer from the belly of the fish.
 - In chapter three he was running with God by doing what the Lord had asked.
 - In chapter four he was running ahead of God by not seeing a repentant Assyria was a good thing.
- In all four chapters we see the varying life of a man of God. Each time God was causing an attitude adjustment to be made and each time Jonah did. Jonah was constantly making adjustments and the end result was more than 120,000 people being saved from their own destruction.

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Application:

Life is constantly throwing us different pitches that are hard to hit. We can continue on in the same direction and never arrive where we should be if we are not careful. If we will just be willing to adjust our lives to fit God instead of the other way around, then we will be the people whom make a big difference in the lives of others.

Paul: "A person who networks can make all the difference."

Of all the people in the Bible, Paul is the one that comes across to me as a networker. What is a networker? They are those who know many people work hard connecting them to each other for the common good. Paul was connected to so many people throughout the Roman Empire and as a result facilitated great growth in his work.

Networking is always a key to a strong organization. Paul possessed so many of the networking skills and it made a difference to many in the world.

- Good communication.
 - Of all the letters we have in the New Testament, the majority were written by Paul. He was an avid communicator to the churches. Without these letters going back and forth, the consistency needed in the church family would not have occurred.
- Willing to travel.
 - He was constantly on the move as a missionary should be.
 - He went on at least four lengthy mission trips that covered many thousands of miles on roads and on sea.
- Always meeting different people.
 - Notice that Paul was reaching out to many people different from the culture that he originated from. He truly believed in being all things to all people that by all means he might save some (1 Cor 9:22).
 - It did not matter if you were a Jew, a Greek or anything in between, for Paul reached out to them all.
- He kept in touch with his old acquaintances. We see this in the closing of his letters to the churches.
 - In Romans 1:1-15 he sends his greetings to Phoebe, Prisca and Aquila, Epaenetus, Mary, Andronicus and Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, the *household* of Aristobulus, Herodion, the *household* of Narcissus, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them, Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. This is over thirty people from that one congregation that he is connected to.

Application:

If we ever want to be that one person that can make all the difference to others in the world, then we must strive to be a networker.

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In closing, there are many people from the biblical archives whom made a difference in the lives of many. Be willing to study out these records, take on those skills and be effective for the kingdom of God. If we do so, then perhaps we could find a new and deeper level of satisfaction for our own lives.

Always be willing to be the one whom can make all the difference to those around us.