

IMPACT

You don't have to be a celebrity or be famous to make an impact for Christ; you simply have to follow God's lead.

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
– John 13:34-35

IMPACT SURVEY

Read aloud the following statements and decide if you agree or disagree. Pick whatever pops into your head first, so...*no "somewhat agrees" allowed.*

1. One person can have a positive impact on thousands.
2. The most powerful people make the biggest impact.
3. A celebrity has more opportunities to influence others than the person sitting next to you.
4. A small group of people can change the world.
5. Inaction is as powerful as action.

You don't have to be a Hollywood star or an Instagram influencer to make an impact. In fact, the Bible gives us example after example of people who, despite feeling inadequate, made a huge impact in their area of influence, and ultimately, the world. Nope, they weren't perfect. But they recognized what mattered, and they got off the sofa (okay, may not be the "sofa") and did something! Likewise, there are so many ways that you can impact the world!

The following people did extraordinary things for God just by being obedient to the call.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

John recognized Jesus before he was even born. And John preached the same message over and over again until people began to listen! (Side note: He ate locusts.) John the Baptist was just one man. He referred to himself as "just a voice," but he was the one who told anyone who would listen that Jesus was coming. His message was simple: "Behold the lamb!" He was saying, "Here is your savior!" A simple message with lasting spiritual impact. Despite his doubt (when things got tough) and his strange diet choices, John the Baptist is a Biblical hero, ranking alongside Moses and Noah. Why? Because it was John's goal to make an impact for Christ.

JONAH

Despite making the really poor decision to run from God, Jonah ended up learning his lesson and obeying God's call to bring a warning of destruction to Nineveh, a city filled to the brim with sin. Jonah was terrified, and he didn't believe that any good could come of walking into this deathtrap. He was convinced that Nineveh would reject his message. Instead, because of Jonah's obedience, Nineveh's people, from "the greatest to the least," repented and believed in God. Even the king himself turned to God. And when God saw what had happened in that city, he relented and did not destroy them. Talk about an impact!

JOSIAH

A lesser-known Biblical account. Josiah was one of the greatest kings to ever rule in Israel. Talk about feelings of inadequacy...Josiah was only 8 years old when he began his reign! Despite his youth, God looked at him with favor because he did what "was right in the eyes of the Lord." Later, Josiah repented on behalf of Israel's disobedience and made a covenant with God (and all of his people) to follow him. He read the Book of the Law to the people and vowed before God to follow it. Imagine how Israel would have fared under the reign of a disobedient king? We don't have to...because this young king made a huge impact by following God's call on his life.

You might be thinking that you can't make an impact like the people we just discussed. But there's where you're wrong. The obstacles that stood in the way of John the Baptist, Jonah, and Josiah weren't any different than the obstacles that stand in your way right now.

*Are you worried that no one would take you seriously? **So were they.***

*Are you worried that you can't do it alone? **So were they.***

*Are you worried that no one will listen? **So were they.***

Yes! The task can seem overwhelming. But each of these people and many more made the daily decision to follow God in their everyday lives.

Here are 6 things you can do to do make an impact in the world:

1. Love Others.

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." – John 13:34-35

By "this," by love, others know that we follow Christ. When we begin loving others, not preaching at them, we begin to make an impact for Christ. He asks us to love people in order to show them what a Christian truly is. And it's that love – that surprising, unexpected, generous love – that will get others to crave what you have.

2. Determine Your Area of Influence.

Make a list of the people you interact with on a daily basis. Then think about some simple ways that you can bless them. Sometimes, a simple act of kindness can change the trajectory of someone's day. You'll never know how much of a difference you can make by simply recognizing that your words and actions do affect those around you

3. Get Involved.

Kingdom work is going on all over the world. Think about a gift, talent, or ability that God has given you, and figure out a way to use it.

4. Incorporate the Gospel Story into Your Daily Conversations.

"Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, 'Get up and head south on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, the desert route. So, he got up and set out. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, (that is, the queen of the Ethiopians) in charge of her entire treasury, who had come to Jerusalem to worship, and was returning home. Seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. The Spirit said to Philip, 'Go and join up with that chariot.' Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' He replied, 'How can I, unless someone instructs me?' So, he invited Philip to get in and sit with him.

This was the scripture passage he was reading, 'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who will tell of his posterity? For his life is taken from the earth.' Then the eunuch said to Philip in reply, 'I beg you, about whom is the prophet saying this? About himself, or about someone else?' then Philip opened his mouth and, beginning with this scripture passage, he proclaimed Jesus to him. As they traveled along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'Look, there is water. What is to prevent me from being baptized?' Then he ordered the chariot to stop, and Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water, and he baptized him. When they came out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing.

What an amazing story! All Philip did was take an opportunity to tell someone about Jesus. The Holy Spirit was there, guiding and prodding like He does, and Philip was simply obedient. Can you take your conversations and turn them into opportunities to spread the Gospel? Of course, you can! If talking about Jesus becomes second nature to you, you'll make an impact wherever you go. And remember, it's not your job to lead someone to Jesus – that's God's! All you have to do is follow God's lead.

5. Forgive.

We can't be a very fruitful vessel for Christ if we hold onto grudges and un-forgiveness. Not only can un-forgiveness get in between you and God, it can also ruin your chance to show others what God's love looks like. When we offer forgiveness to others, even though they may not seem to deserve it, we do the difficult work on being obedient to God's word. It will make an impact because the world does not forgive like God forgives.

6. Pray for Others.

This is simple. Pray for people. When we go to God with the needs and cares of others, it shows that we depend on Him. Plus, it models for others how to call on Jesus.

Dear Lord,

I pray for my friends right now. I pray that you will help them with the struggles they are going through in this season. For you know exactly what they need in this moment. Draw near to them and let them feel your presence. Open their eyes, ears, and hearts to you. Help them have the discernment to hear your voice as you lead them in their next steps. Speak to them as they read your word and bring verses of encouragement and comfort to their attention. I pray that you will calm any fear or anxiety they may be feeling. Replace it with the confidence to obey your word and to trust you. I pray that your guidance will be clear to them from this day forward. In your name, I pray. Amen.