

Summary

Many companies use "Experience the Difference" as a catchphrase. We explore the profound difference Jesus makes in addressing confusion, ignorance, despair, sin, evil, grief, lostness, and death through faith, forgiveness, and eternal life, urging believers to share this transformative message.

Call to Worship

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord. (Ps 89:15)

Worship in song *by Lyn DeShazo*

1. Holy words long preserved for our walk in this world
They resound with God's own heart, O let the ancient words impart
2. Words of life, words of hope, give us strength, help us cope
In this world where'er we roam, ancient words will guide us home.
*Ancient words, ever true, changing me, changing you.
We have come with open hearts, O let the ancient words impart.*
3. Holy words of our faith handed down to this age
Came to us through sacrifice, O heed the faithful words of Christ.
4. Holy words long preserved for our walk in this world,
They resound with God's own heart, O let the ancient words impart.

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Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 51:1-12

Prayer of confession

God of integrity and truth, we hate to see hypocrisy but find it in ourselves.
Our acts of goodness have hidden within them hope of reward or approval.
Our acts of love have hidden within them the condition that love be returned.
Our religious life has hidden within it fear and superstition rather than love for you.
Forgive our carelessness, self-interest and doubt.
We ask for goodness like Christ's goodness that gave everything in love.
We ask for love like Christ's love that evil can't break down.
We ask to live as Christ lived in a way that honours you. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure

water. *Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*
(Heb 10:22-23)

Prayer of thanksgiving

Gracious God, we worship you, for you are worthy. We see the beauty of your holiness. We receive with awe the wonder of your love. It is, therefore, right to worship you with all that we are.

We worship you with our laughter and joy at the good things of life, for you have created all things for us to enjoy. We worship you with our grief, for you understand it and will journey with us through it. We worship you with our hope, for we have a hope that nothing can take away. We worship you with our doubts, declaring that they will not keep us from rejoicing in our God. We worship you with our loving, in all its gentleness and fierceness, for we know you are the God of love. We worship you with our pain, for we will not give it the power to stop our love of you.

Holy Communion

Jesus was passionate about his people exhibiting the same unity and fellowship with each other as existed between the Father and the Son (Jn 17). The Bible teaches us that the early church devoted themselves to fellowship (1 Jn 2:42). The Greek word for fellowship is koinonia, meaning “community, partnership or fellowship.” Jesus expected his followers to be distinctive in their love, unity and fellowship (Jn 1:35).

To celebrate this fellowship, Jesus instituted a practice amongst his followers of them “breaking bread” together. They would break open a loaf and pass it to each other, giving thanks to God for two things:

The first was that they were all sharing in Christ's body. Everyone was acknowledging that they were beneficiaries of Jesus giving up his body to die in our place and pay the price for our sins. The bread represented Jesus' body given to us. We need to note that bread was not a luxury but a staple food required by people in order to live. Similarly, everyone needs to accept Christ's death for them in order to live eternally. This is why Jesus called himself the bread of life (Jn 6:48).

The second thing they gave thanks for when breaking bread together was their unity in Christ. Each of us share in the one loaf. Each of us are in Christ. Each of us are pieces of the one loaf. As such, Holy Communion is a powerful reminder of our need to be united together in Christ.

Let's eat the bread together and celebrate the sacrifice of Christ for us and our unity in Christ.

(Give thanks for the bread and the wine which represents the body and blood of Jesus sacrificed in order to rescue us back to God. Then share the bread and wine together.)

The Bible Reading

- 2 Corinthians 5:17

The Message “EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE”

What do all the following companies and organisations have in common?

1. AMC Theatres
2. Apple iPhone
3. Western Leisure Park
4. ETV1
5. Cardinia Park
6. Hamilton castors
7. Balgowah RSL club
8. Silverbird cinemas
9. Toyota
10. ReBath
11. Schmidt Reality

All of these companies (and pages more of them on the Internet) promote themselves using the catch phrase: “Experience the Difference”.

Know the difference Jesus makes:

This is the difference Jesus makes:

Confusion about God's existence is settled. God is... and he wants a relationship with you.

From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. (Acts 17:26-27)

Ignorance about God's nature dispelled. We see in Jesus the perfect fullness of God.

*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (Jn 14:9)
The Son is the image of the invisible God, the first-born over all creation. (Col 1:15)
For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. (Col 2:9)*

Despair over who it is who guarantees what is ultimate truth and good – dispelled.

*God is truth. (Jn 3:33)
Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (Jn 14:6)*

Despair over believing whether God likes you – shattered.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 Jn 4:10)

Despair at ever being good enough to be accepted by God – answered.

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. (1 Pet 3:18)

Despair at ever being able to fundamentally change your character and overcome the compulsion to sin – dispelled.

“Experience The Difference”

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. (2 Cor 5:17)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 Jn 1:9)

Inability to overcome evil – totally reversed.

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. (1 Cor 10:13)
For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1:13-14)

Inability to overcome grief – totally reversed.

Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. (1 Thess 4:13-14)

We: “having been justified by Jesus' grace, ...might become heirs having the hope of eternal life” (Tit 3:7)

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure (Heb 6:19).

Lostness at not knowing your purpose (what you do) on earth – shattered.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do. (Eph 2:10)

Lostness at not knowing your meaning (who you are) – dispelled

Yet to all who receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. (Jn 1:12)

Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:12-13)

Your eternal future in the face of the certainty of death – assured.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (Jn 3:16)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom 6:23)

Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. (Jn 5:24)

That's the difference that Christ makes.

Tell people about the difference Jesus makes

Ours is the responsibility of spreading this good news around so that others can also experience the difference Jesus makes.

“Experience The Difference”

The Bible says:

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise” (Prov 11:30).

Jesus said: *“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (John 20:21)*

God ... through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him (Jesus)

(2 Cor 2:14)

Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try and persuade men.

(2 Cor 5:11a)

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. (Psalm 6)

This verse in Philemon 6 is fascinating and typically God-like. It suggests that it is as we share our faith... we grow in our understanding of the good things we have in Jesus.

I have found this to be true. When I explain Jesus to others, I find it crystallises and makes clearer my own Christian hope.

Let's get ready for his kingdom by:

- understanding the difference Jesus makes
- living and speaking in such a way that others also experience this difference.

Prayers for others

Pray with passion for those things God has placed on your heart, remembering the persecuted church, world events, the sick and our leaders.

Benediction

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. (Eph 3:16-17a)