

## DIFFERENCE MAKER WEEKLY DEVOTIONALS

As followers of Jesus, each of us are part of a bigger mission, 'The Great Commission.' We were created to live for something bigger than ourselves. Jesus invites us to join his mission to make disciples of all nations. In other words, God put us here to be *Difference Makers*. The following devotionals are designed to be read one per week throughout the month of April. They will encourage you to submit to Jesus, act courageously, and share your story.

### Week One—Worshippers & Doubters

*Then, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*  
—Matthew 28:16-20

Imagine being one of the small group of disciples who gathered on a mountain to meet Jesus for the very first time after just witnessing his brutal death and burial. What thoughts might be going through your mind as you see the resurrected Jesus? Would you be ready to fully embrace Jesus?

Interestingly, in Matthew 28:17 we are told that some of the disciples worshiped Jesus while others doubted. The word "doubted" carries the idea of being double-minded or hesitant. It's as if they wanted to believe but were struggling to embrace Jesus like those who worshiped him.

Stop for a moment and ponder this scene. As you consider Jesus, do you identify with the worshiper or the doubter? Is Jesus the center of your affections or do you find yourself mired in doubt? Maybe you are a worshiper one week and a doubter the next, the very nature of being human.

Regardless of your heart's posture, don't miss what happens next!

Jesus gives both the worshipers and the doubters the same mission, "*make disciples of all nations.*" This is fascinating! Jesus doesn't expect us to have it all figured out, but he does expect us to be obedient. In other words, there is room for both worshipers and doubters to follow Jesus. This is great news!

Remember the first words Jesus said to his earliest followers, “Come follow me.” That invitation remains today to both worshipers and doubters. There is no one like Jesus who meets us in our doubt and can transform us into worshipers. We don’t need to have it all figured out before we follow Jesus, our relationship with Him is dynamic, often moving back and forth from doubt to worship.

To follow Jesus is to go where he leads. His mission is clear, “make disciples.” Is that your mission? Whether you are a worshiper or a doubter, the invitation remains the same, join Jesus on his mission. Be a *Difference Maker* and watch God not only change the world, but change you along the way.

### **Reflect & Respond**

How would you describe a worshiper?

How would you describe a doubter?

Are you currently a worshiper or doubter? How do you know?

How tightly is your personal mission aligned with the mission of Jesus? What examples can you point to?

What is your next move as a Difference Maker?

## Week Two—Supremacy & Submission

*For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. –Colossians 1:16-18*

What adjective(s) comes to mind as you consider this description of Jesus? It's interesting that the Apostle Paul uses a variation of the word **supreme** as a summation of the person and position of Jesus.

When I was a teenager, I remember riding my bike to Taco Bell because that was the place to get the cheapest food in town. I could get a Taco for .49 cents, but for an additional .30 cents I could upgrade to the "supreme" taco. That was the first time I remember encountering the word "supreme," and as a teenager I learned rather quickly that "supreme" meant "better than." In this case, a supreme taco was better than a regular taco because it used better ingredients. To be honest, it's hard to believe anything from Taco Bell is of the highest quality but I hope you get the point.

**Supreme (def.)**—highest in rank or authority; paramount; sovereign; chief. of the highest quality, degree, character, importance

Looking back at the passage in Colossians, Paul lists 5 unique attributes about Jesus that set him apart as *supreme*. Take a moment and reflect on these 5 attributes and how they impact you.

Attribute of Jesus	What does this tell me about Jesus?	What does this mean for me?
He is the creator		
He is eternal		
He is the sustainer		
He is the head of the church		
He is the firstborn from among the dead		

All of these attributes add up to one conclusive statement by the Apostle Paul in Colossians 3:18, “**so that in everything he might have the supremacy.**”

Here is the question for you to consider, “Is Jesus supreme in your life?”

The key to realizing Jesus’ supremacy is through submission, where we acknowledge our limitations and embrace his qualifications. To make this ultra practical, we can take inventory of the universal resources that God has given each of us and ask ourselves if he really is supreme.

### Reflect & Respond

Resource	Questions
<b>Time</b>	Who and what gets the best or most of your time? How are you investing your time in other people's lives?
<b>Treasure</b>	Where is most of your treasure invested? Are you stewarding God’s blessings by redirecting them to accomplish his purposes?
<b>Talent</b>	Do you know your spiritual gift? How are you using your giftedness to point people to Jesus?
<b>Tongue</b>	Is Jesus supreme in your speech? Do you find yourself freely talking about Jesus in appropriate settings? How is Jesus supreme in your relationships?
<b>Thoughts</b>	Is Jesus supreme in your affections/desires? What do you find yourself dreaming about? What keeps you up in the middle of the night? Do you regularly capture your thoughts and submit them in obedience to Jesus?

## Week Three–Sent

*Again, Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”*  
–John 20:21

In chapter one of Mark’s Gospel account of Jesus we are told a story about how Jesus bursts on the scene performing one miracle after another. As you might expect, once word began to spread, more and more people started showing up. Jesus spent the night performing miracles; healing the sick, and casting out demons. The very next morning, Jesus’ disciples were ready to take the next step in their newfound popularity with the people, but when they went to get Jesus, he was gone.

After searching for Jesus, the disciples finally found him in a quiet place praying. They didn’t say hello, ask him how he was doing, or even what he was doing. The text says, they exclaimed, “everyone is looking for you.”

So Jesus, seeing the excitement on their faces, grabbed his sandals, hiked up his cloak and started running for the people. Actually, it didn’t quite happen like that. We are told that Jesus responds to his disciple’s urgent plea by saying, “Let us go somewhere else—to nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.”

Don’t miss these 6 life-altering words, ***“that is why I have come.”***

At the end of his time on earth, Jesus revealed a truth about himself and subsequently challenged his followers. He said, **“as the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”** Jesus owned his identity as one who was “sent” by his Father. Just like in Mark chapter 1, we consistently see Jesus making decisions throughout the 4 gospels based on his identity as one who is “sent.”

He was secure in his identity as one who was “sent.” He didn’t need the praise of the crowds to make him feel significant. Nor did he need to twist people’s arms to receive his message to validate his missional ego.

Interestingly, people who were nothing like Jesus, liked Jesus. Even though Jesus came with a very specific mission, he never seemed rushed and he never made people feel like they were merely pawns in a cosmic chess match.

Jesus’ words were matched with his compassionate actions and his actions were often accompanied by life-giving words. He had an uncanny way of making people feel seen and loved. Need some examples? Just ask any of the tax collectors who he ate dinner with, the woman at the well, Zacchaeus, the woman caught in adultery, the blind man by the side of the road, and the list could go on and on.

In the same way, you too have been sent by Jesus to accomplish something specific on this side of heaven. There will only ever be one Jesus, but we are an extension of the work that he began. What have you been “sent” to do? Who have you been “sent” to serve? How will you live out this identity as a “sent” one?

### **Reflect & Respond**

Stop for a moment and reflect on Jesus’ words in John 20:21. Who or what comes to mind when you think of being “sent” by Jesus?

How have people responded to you as a “sent” one?

Are there any insecurities that come to mind that could be hindering your identity as a “sent” one?

How can you be a “sent” one in the following contexts: at home, at work, in your neighborhood, or around the world?

## Week Four–Story

*And so, it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power.*

*-1 Corinthians 2:1-5*

The apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, "I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling." Wow, even the Apostle Paul was unsure of himself when it came to telling the story of Jesus' death and resurrection.

Paul was notorious for moving from one city to another in order to tell the story of Jesus. Some people were ready to lean in and listen to his story while others were hardened and resistant to receive his message. Regardless of his audience, what made Paul such a successful storyteller? Paul said, "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on God's power." Notice his reliance on the Holy Spirit. Paul didn't manufacture a story, he stuck to the basics and relied on the Holy Spirit to change lives. Jesus said in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him."

This didn't absolve Paul of sharing his story. In fact, Paul actively looked for opportunities to share his story. Do you ask God for opportunities to share your story? Interestingly, in Galatians 5:25, Paul implores us to, "keep in step with the Spirit." He encourages us to keep in step because it must be easy to get out of step.

I like to think of sharing stories as a dance. In partnership with God, we learn to step together in the power of the Holy Spirit seeking the right time, right person, and the right story to tell. This approach requires us to be actively engaged with God, seeking the Holy Spirit's wisdom and guidance.

As you look to be a Difference Maker, don't put undue pressure on yourself to share your story, but let's make sure we are asking God for opportunities to do so.

### Reflect and Respond

What do you think gave Paul pause in sharing the Gospel?

What makes you hesitant in sharing what God has done in your life with other people?

How do you invite the Holy Spirit into your conversations? Do you actively ask God for opportunities to share your story?

How do you think Paul practiced staying in step with the Spirit when he moved from town to town? What is one thing you can do to keep in step with the Spirit of God this week?