

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

How can I make a difference?

vincent-life-lessons-series-facebook

To be a difference maker don't let your environment get you down.

J. Patrick Murphy writes in one of his mini-reflections on the life of Mr. Vincent, "France was at war through all of Vincent's life except for the last few months. Beheading for religious dissidents was common. The clergy were incompetent, corrupt or both.

Lesson: Don't let the environment get you down; you can make a difference anyway.

Vincent certainly made a difference! When he died the preacher at his funeral said that Vincent changed the face of France. Talk about making a difference! Ah, you say, that was Vincent, I mean, SAINT Vincent! I am not in that league. Maybe not. But you can be a "difference maker."

I recently read a summary of the book [Great Work: How to Make a Difference People Love](#) by David Sturt. You don't have to have a glamorous job. Anyone can be difference maker.

In 2001 researchers began to study how people in unglamorous jobs were coping with what they called "devalued work." When they tried to think of supposedly unrewarding jobs to study, they chose hospital janitors.

As Dutton and Wrzesniewski interviewed the cleaning staff of a major hospital in the Midwest, they discovered that a certain subset of housekeepers didn't see themselves as part of the janitorial staff at all. They saw themselves as part of the professional staff, as part of the healing team—and that changed everything.

These people would get to know the patients and their families and would offer support in small but important ways: a box of Kleenex here, a glass of water there, or a word of encouragement. One housekeeper reported rearranging pictures on the walls of comatose patients, with the hope that a change of scenery might have some positive effect.

Reminds me of the [Star Thrower story](#): A man was walking on the beach one day and noticed a boy who was reaching down, picking up a starfish and throwing it in the ocean. As he approached, he called out, "Hello! What are you doing?" The boy looked up and said, "I'm throwing starfish into the ocean." "Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the man. "The tide stranded them. If I don't throw them in the water before the sun comes up, they'll die" came the answer. "Surely you realize that there are miles of beach, and thousands of starfish. You'll never throw them all back, there are too many. You can't possibly make a difference." The boy listened politely, then picked up another starfish. As he threw it back into the sea, he said, "It made a difference for that one."

It's all in how you frame the story.

A man came upon a construction site where three people were working. He asked the first, "What are you doing?" and the man replied: "I am laying bricks." He asked the second, "What are you doing?" and the man replied: "I am building a wall." As he approached the third, he heard him humming a tune as he worked, and asked, "What are you doing?" The man stood, looked up at the sky, and smiled, "I am building a cathedral!"

What are you doing to make a difference?

Are you

- laying bricks?
- building walls?
- building the kingdom?
- a star thrower?

