



History: History and Change

What if history were about making a difference?

Natasha's primary class was studying the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, and she wanted them to see how his leadership helped produce social change. Some people did not accept things as they were; they became agents of change to improve their communities.

"Many of the leaders of the Civil Rights movement were African American ministers who made a difference to their communities. I chose the Martin Luther King, who was inspired by his Christian faith. I also linked the work we did to the Stop the Traffik campaign (<http://www.stopthetraffik.org/resources/chocolate/chaga.aspx>) for good conditions for child cocoa workers in order to connect to another current issue and a product familiar to the students.

"We studied Dr. King's career as a minister and civil rights leader. We looked at the impact he had, first in his own community and then nationally. We talked a little about how his faith led him to seek change.

"I made the link to people today who are agents of change, highlighting that we do not have to accept things as they are. We too can make a difference. I adapted some material about child workers on cocoa farms from the Stop the Traffik website, since I needed to make this suitable for an elementary class. We looked at the Good Chocolate Guide. (<http://www.stopthetraffik.org/takeaction/chocolate/>).

"We made a poster about chocolate produced in fair conditions so that people would know where it is available if they wanted to buy some. I was careful not to make the students feel guilty about buying other chocolate, since they are young and not in control of what is purchased in the home. The students then prepared a short presentation for another class."

What's going on here?

Natasha saw her history lesson as an opportunity to look at agents of change and what motivated them and to encourage pupils about the possibility of change. She connected

history learning to questions of justice.

She engaged students in exploring the stories of reformers, reflecting on connections to their own lives (the sweets they eat), looking outward beyond their immediate context, asking big questions, and expressing their learning in a poster.

She reshaped her practice by framing her lesson to focus on change, using objects to reinforce the focus (chocolate), choosing stories and examples that helped her class to be outward looking, making connections by using faith examples, and creating a chance for students to apply their learning (assembly).

What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

With the news usually being bad, it is easy to give up and feel that nothing changes; but the eye of faith sees things differently. The Bible promises that one day, when God's kingdom comes in its fullness, evil will be no more. That kingdom is peace and love, justice and joy and all that is good. God calls Christian communities to begin living this kingdom life now by restoring some of the damage done in the world by sin. By becoming communities that live differently, Christians can become agents of change in the wider world, bringing hope. Living faithfully involves cooperating with the Holy Spirit to become agents of change. Love drives the desire to change—love for people who God made and who should be treated with dignity.

What difference does it make?

By looking at how people made a difference to whole communities and linking that to a modern campaign, Natasha demonstrated that we can learn from history and be encouraged to make a difference, in small ways, to our own communities.

Where could we go from here?

Making a difference can apply to technology, design, art—in fact, any part of life. Paintings and poems can make a difference to how people think, feel, relate to others,

and live their lives.

Digging deeper

Being an agent of change is not about “fixing” things; it’s about Christians living a communal way of life that says to our world, “It does not have to be like this. Another way is possible.” It involves taking that alternate way of being and living it out in the wider world, seeking healing and justice. Jesus used the images of a light shining and a city on a hill to communicate this (Matthew 5:14)

The decisive battle with evil was won by Jesus through his life, death, and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:55-56). Evil is still active, but the outcome is not in doubt: evil does not win. The cross is not just about personal faith in Christ and God transforming individuals; it’s about hope for the whole world (Romans 8:21-22). Faith brings both hope and realism. We live in a broken world, and change will be difficult, but with God it is not impossible.

Good is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death. Desmond Tutu

Discouragement often comes from trying to do things in our own strength and as individuals. In the Bible the emphasis is on Christian communities in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:32-34).

Jesus preached God’s kingdom, and the Lord’s Prayer says, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10). The kingdom is about the rule of God, which will one day be complete but starts here. The kingdom is about the great reversal of all that is wrong with our world, and it began with Jesus. His coming launched the kingdom; his ministry demonstrated its power. By his death and resurrection Jesus conquered evil and declared his lordship over sin and death. The resurrection was a foreshadowing of the renewal of this world that begins now and one day will come in its fullness.

She would have known that when a willing victim who has committed no treachery was killed in a traitor’s stead, the Table would crack and Death itself would start working backward. from The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, by C. S. Lewis



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