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Greetings Friends,

Windows 7 is now available. I haven't quite figured out their numbering system, but regardless, Microsoft is aggressively marketing Windows 7 these days. One campaign seen in NFL games involves summarizing each game in *seven words*. (Because it's *Windows 7*) Near the end of each game, the announcers make a seven-word summary, something along the lines of:

Seattle led early. Cardinals ruled second half. Or: Ravens' defense shuts out struggling Browns offense.
Or: One of the most recent for the Colts fans, *Bill Belichick must have lost his mind?*

It's amazing how accurately you can summarize a game in seven words. Do you want to sum up the life of a Christian disciple in seven words? Here it is. *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* (John 3:30) John the Baptist captured the essence of what it means to be a follower of Christ: He is to become greater; I am to become less. His increase takes care of our increase. John's purpose was to pave the way for the coming of the Messiah. There is a sense in which our purpose is to do the same thing. Especially at Christmas time.

This is such a wonderful time of the year, but it's hectic. It's easy for some to get lost in the pace to the extent that they miss the beauty and simplicity of the Christmas message. Our job is like John the Baptist's. We have the opportunity to prepare the way for the Lord, to make a straight path for him so that others can experience his presence.

Maybe the Christmas season could be summarized with the words: *"It's not about me, It's about Jesus,"* or *"You are the reason for the season."* Here's one that I've thought about lately, ***"It's the difference that makes the difference!"***

If our Christian message is a mirror image of the message of the world, the world yawns and goes on its way, saying, "What else is new? I've heard all that since I was born." But if the Christian lifestyle and motivation and answers are different, the world cannot help but sit up and take notice, thinking: *How come they live in the same place I live, but they are able to live a different kind of life? Why is their love so deep and lasting and ours so shallow and fickle? How is it that she can forgive and never hold a grudge? Why do these people have so much more compassion, kindness, integrity, and patience than anyone else I know?* Do you get the message? **It's the difference that makes the difference!**

Think about it: Do people feel more alive when they're around you? Do you create within them a thirst for God? Does anyone ever wonder why you are so unselfish, so thoughtful, so caring? What do people see when they look at you? Do they see your good works? Do they hear your courtesy? Do they detect your smile? Do they notice that you stop to thank them? Do they see every visible manifestation of Christ's life being normally lived out through you? When they see all that, Jesus said, they "will glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Isn't it a pleasure when someone says to you, "Why are you like that?" And isn't it a natural thing to respond, "I'm glad you asked. Let me tell you what's happened"?

"When the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it. It is then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first" (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones).

In the coming weeks, I encourage you to look for opportunities in which you can step aside and let the message of Jesus take the spotlight in your life. Please know that Rhonda and I deeply love and appreciate you and we look forward seeing you each week in one of our services.

For His Service,

Pastor Phil & Rhonda

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Heartland Christian Center is a high impact community
that leads people into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ by
touching the heart of God, healing the heart of man and reaching the heart of the world.