



Global College of Ministry

EXPLORE

The Christian & Change

Change: Let It Begin with Me

“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”
(Acts 9:6).

What would you like to accomplish in your lifetime? What are you doing today to make it happen?

David McNally suggests for you to ask yourself two simple questions every night before you go to sleep.

1. Did I today, in some way, grow as a person?
2. Did I today, in some way, make the world a better place in which to live?

It could be added:

3. Did I today, in some way, make progress toward what I want to achieve in my lifetime?
4. Did I help make the church a better place for souls and for the future generations?

You may have heard the song, “Lord, send a revival, and let it start in me.” When it comes to change, it needs to start in me (and you). People say, “Prayer changes things,” but most of the time they should be admitting, “Prayer changes me!”

In an effective organization the first to be changed should be the leader. Once the leader realizes how difficult it is to make changes in his life, he will know how hard it is for others. It has commonly been said, “A leader that leads, precedes.” He sets the example and implements the changes in his life first. John Maxwell claims, “Change the leader; change the organization.”

Howard Hendricks in *Teaching to Change Lives* claims, “The more you change, the more you become an instrument of change in the lives of others.”

Moving to the Next Level

In order to move to the next level of church growth and evangelism, we must be willing to accept change. Change is required for success.

John Maxwell quotes a story found in Paul Wharton’s book called *Stories and Parables for Preachers and Teachers*.

“I was a revolutionary when I was young and all my prayer to God was: ‘Lord, give me the energy to change the world.’ As I approached middle age and realized that my life was half gone without my changing a single soul, I changed my prayer to: ‘Lord, give me the grace to change all those who come into contact with me, just my family and friends, and I shall be satisfied.’ Now that I am an old man and my days are numbered, I have begun to see how foolish I have been. My one prayer now is: ‘Lord, give me the grace to change myself.’ If I had prayed for this right from the start, I would not have wasted my life.”

Think about it. How much time do you spend thinking or talking about how others could improve and/or change? A much better investment of time and energy could be directed at changing yourself.

From Saul to Paul

“Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers” (Galatians 1:14).

Saul was a prime candidate for potential change. Not only was he zealous for tradition, he was bound by it.

Saul’s story begins with “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1) and “persecuting . . . unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (Acts 22:4).

Through his actions he hoped to turn the Christians back toward Jewish tradition. Little did he know that he was in for a change—a big change.

From there, his story dramatically changed to being knocked down, trembling, astonished, blinded, and helplessly waiting on Straight Street. (It is unfortunate that some people need to be knocked down before their eyes are opened.)

When Saul encountered the Lord, he asked, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). It could be said that he asked, “Lord, how do you want me to change?”

Conversion on the road to Damascus brought Saul to a street called “Straight” and into a journey called “Change.”

Once Saul was changed, he was better equipped to assist others in the change process.

On the Day of Pentecost those assembled inquired, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). These people recognized that they needed a change. They were pricked in their heart. They basically asked, “How can we be changed?”

We All Need to Change

None of us are perfect. Areas of our lives constantly need to be changed as we strive for perfection.

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Philippians 3:12-15).

Moving Forward

H. S. Vigeveno claims, “Dr. Elton Trueblood says that the church must either advance or decay. Any group that ceases to grow and spread is already dying. Standing still is stagnation and sure death.”

You need to ask yourself two questions. That’s right; don’t ask others, but ask yourself.

 What could be done to move the church forward?

 What am I personally going to do to help achieve this?

**“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”
(Winston Churchill)**

To be effective in a changing world, we have to keep learning. We need to keep advancing.

One of the best ways to motivate change is to create an environment of quality. “To begin the process of quality improvement, do what you can to improve what you can, where you can, when you can.” (*The Five Star Church* by Stan Toler and Alan Nelson)

Stephen Covey offers sound advice when he tells us we have two options. We can focus on things that are within our scope of control or focus on things that are outside of our scope of control. When we focus on things within our control, we tend to make progress and accomplish our goals. However, when we focus on those things beyond our control, we usually cannot do anything about it and end up complaining and blaming others.

When you look at the church, you can see a lot of things that need to be changed. It does not take a special gift to find these areas. It does take a special discernment to know what to do to solve these problems. One man said, “Don’t come to me telling me of the problem if you can’t at the same time tell me the solution.”

One Bite at a Time

Change in the church must start with you and me. The next step in bringing about change is to find an area of the church requiring change that we are able to tackle and work on. You cannot bring about change in the entire church at one time, but you can work on an area until it is changed. This will improve you, life in the church, and inspire others to be involved in change.

“Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing.”
(Michael LeBoef)

How do you eat an elephant? You do it one bite at a time. The longest journey starts with a single step. The first step is to begin. It is not possible to implement all necessary changes at once.

Quotes on Change




“It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.”
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” (Elmer Towns)

In an earlier lesson it was mentioned, “Right things done repeatedly over time compound success.” In order for us to be our best and reach our highest potential, we must be intentional and perpetual. We cannot give up! We must work at change every day—consistently.

Someone has aptly said, “Today’s preparations determine tomorrow’s achievements.”

To form new habits (changes) Donna Fisher in her book, *People Power*, suggests:

-  Have an awareness of the need to change and a desire to change.
-  Choose new actions, attitudes, and behaviors.
-  Focus on and implement the new habits.

Study Questions

1. What two questions does David McNally suggest we should ask each night? _____

2. Which person in the organization should be changed first? _____

Change Agents in the Church Today

“For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us”
(Acts 6:14).

It All Began with a Change

The process of salvation is a process of change. God expects a change in our actions and attitude (called repentance).

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

When we obey the plan of salvation, God changes us by forgiving us, washing away our sins, and filling us with the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Our Christian experience begins with change. It will also end with change. Don't you think that there ought to be some changes along the way, too?

“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Philippians 3:21).

Wanted: Change Agents









One of the church's most critical needs is for a new breed of leaders. In order for the church to advance, we, as leaders, must first advance. Before we can expect others to grow, we must first grow. Howard Hendricks said, “If you want to continue leading, you must continue changing.”

It has been said that during times of “no change,” mere management, maintenance and tradition keep organizational wheels winding. In times of “change” strong, creative (new ideas) and innovative (putting new ideas to use) leadership are required. As we progress we need to be careful. Yesterday's advances have a way of becoming tomorrow's traditions. The creative ideas someone had five or ten years ago can easily become church traditions. People tend to hold on to the comfortable past. Effective leaders need to be open to new ideas.

Change agents produce innovative ideas that will encourage change, and they do their best to motivate others to accept these changes. This requires a loving, patient attitude and open communication.

Change in the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts is a book of change.

-  Pentecost brought changes so drastic that people asked, “What meaneth this?” (Acts 2:12).
-  Lives were changed through water baptism in Jesus’ name and the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
-  Worship places changed as believers began meeting from house to house.
-  New methods of giving were established as members sold all of their possessions and brought the money to the church.
-  Persecution brought change as believers were scattered everywhere.
-  A new mindset was needed to accommodate the Gentile believers (considered untouchables to the Jews).
-  The Jerusalem Council brought about changes in the expectations placed on believers.
-  Great men, like Saul of Tarsus, were drastically changed. Saul (Paul) ultimately was used as a change agent to begin the missionary movement.

In Acts 6 the leaders could not continue the apostolic ministry because they were busy waiting on tables. They had to adjust their priorities. Even today preachers are performing many functions that could be easily handled by the membership and local leaders.

Peter admonished the crowd assembled on the Day of Pentecost to “save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40). He referred to a generation that was spinning round and round on the wheel of traditions.

The early apostles often challenged the status quo (the normal way people did things). They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). They introduced a new way; “saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:7). They were accused of preaching Jesus, one who would change their customs.

“For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Acts 6:14).

Jesus, the God that Changes yet Never Changes

We need to be agents of change. We preach a gospel that is a life-changing message. Jesus taught His disciples to be agents of change (Matthew 23:1-36, 5:21-44).

In Matthew 5, Jesus was on a mountain giving the “be-attitudes” to His people. He mentioned several times, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time” (Matthew 5:21). He

followed this each time with, “But I say unto you” (Matthew 5:22). He was trying to change traditional thought. However, many opted to hold onto tradition.

“And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:9, 13).

Some Things Never Change

It is imperative that we hold to the old paths when it comes to doctrine.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jeremiah 6:16).

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Philippians 3:1).

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 6:6, 8-9).

We must continue to preach the “same” gospel and uphold biblical teachings and principles. However, methods should change to match changing times. The world around us is constantly changing. We serve an unchanging God in an ever-changing world.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). (He never changes; we do!)

“For I am the LORD, I change not” (Malachi 3:6).

Jesus challenged the traditionalists of His day, called Pharisees. They held to the old ways and refused to tolerate the changes Jesus advocated. Jesus was constantly opposed because He advocated change. He wanted a change of thinking, a change of heart, and a change of lifestyle. One of the greatest enemies to the church today may not come from

outside. It may be “traditionalism,” insistence on doing things the same way that they were done years ago. This brings a sense of security, often called a “comfort zone.” If the way things are done works, keep it. If it does not work best, let us be bold enough to change.

“If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always gotten.”

It is easy to recognize traditionalism in others, but seeing it in ourselves is more difficult.

We need to continue to walk in the old paths of doctrine and godly living. In other areas we need to dig out new paths of creative change. The old ways often do not fit the new circumstances. It has been said, “No condition is permanent.” Conditions change. New options must be examined and risk taken. Even in the physical body all that grows—changes. (The body moves through the process of aging.)

As leaders, we need to establish a sense of urgency for change. We must motivate others to see the need. Focusing on the potential gain from change does this. We must be able to answer, “Why is this better?”

Recruiting More Change Agents



In changing times there needs to be a renewed emphasis on the ministry of the body. Members should be taking their places of responsibility within the body.







“If the tradition of a particular society is such that there is no room for people to exercise their gifts, then let our traditions be shattered to pieces! Let us look at other structures that will make it possible for God’s people to use their gifts. If our traditions mean that one person is needed to drive the bus, and everyone else is a passenger behind, let us remember that the church is compared to a body, not a bus.

There is not just one driver with all the others sitting comfortably behind occasionally patting the driver on the back to assure him he is doing a good job and that he should carry on. What are we doing to make sure that members—ordinary members—have discovered their gifts and that a way has been made for them to exercise those gifts for the profit of all?” (*Wanted: Servant Leaders*) This quote is referring to membership becoming involved in the “body ministry.”

Change Agents in Older Organizations

Being a change agent in a well-established ministry or organization is not easy. Editor Randall Roberts in the book, *From Lessons in Leadership: Fitly Respected* mentions several points in how to be a change agent in a well-established ministry.

-  **Always preserve the reputation of the past.** Frequently praise and never criticize past leaders. The foundation that they have laid is the heritage that the present leader enjoys. If former leaders are still living, keep them informed of progress. Give them special attention.
-  **Move slowly.** It takes ten years to make major changes in older organizations. Don’t make major changes the first year. Get to know the people and the history of the organization.

-  **Seek wide support for change.** Try to get everyone’s support for change. Get everyone moving in the same direction.
-  **Change is painful.** Be ready for the pain. It is not easy to bring about change.
-  **Give away your best ideas.** Allow other people to claim your ideas as their own. Plant seeds in every meeting.
-  **Challenge, encourage, and empower everyone that you work with.** Never be satisfied with low quality, but seek for excellence.
-  **Prepare some change agents to come after you.** Mentor those that will be the next generation of change agents.
-  **Look back.** You need to know how far you have come so that you will understand how far you have to go. (These points adapted from the e-mail newsletter entitled “Ministry Tips — Reinvigorate Your Ministry”.)

Study Questions

11. Explain how the Christian experience begins and ends with change. _____

12. What is one of the most critically needed resources in the church today? _____

13. What type of ideas are needed during a time of organizational change? _____

14. Briefly explain the kind of changes that Pentecost brought. _____

15. What is meant by the phrase “status quo”? _____

16. According to Acts 6:14, what did Jesus want to change? _____

17. What should never change (as related to the Word of God)? _____

18. What is one of the greatest enemies of the church today? _____

19. What does "traditionalism" mean? _____

20. How can leaders motivate others to see the need for change? _____

Additional Notes

Why People Resist Change

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye”
(Acts 7:51).

Repeatedly, in the Gospels and Acts the Pharisees resisted change. They refused to leave their traditions. Actually, the Pharisees were not alone. People throughout time have resisted change. Why?

Thom and Joani Schultz suggested in their book, *Why Nobody Learns Much Of Anything At Church: And How To Fix It*, that there are several reasons why people resist change. They include:

They are content. They are happy where they are and have grown accustomed to it. They are satisfied.

They lack understanding. They do not understand the problems or the solutions. They don't understand how the suggested changes will work.

They are not willing to pay the price. They may understand the need for change but do not believe it is worthy of the investment of time or trouble.

They are tradition-bound. Their theme song, “That is the way we have always done it!”

The fear of loss. What will they lose if the new change is implemented?

John Maxwell in his book, *Developing the Leader Within You*, added the following to this list: The change is not self-started. People will reject the change because they do not have ownership of it. People normally will reject what they have not had a part in deciding (even if the change is a good one).

Routine is interrupted. Change threatens habits that are formed.

The change creates a fear of the unknown.

The purpose of the change is unclear.

Change creates a fear of failure. People think that they cannot do it or that it will fail.

The rewards for change do not match the effort that change requires.

Change will not happen when people engage in negative thinking.

Change may be resisted because the followers do not have a trust and respect for the leader that is making the change.

Change requires more commitment. People may not feel that they have the time it takes to implement the change.

Plan for Change Agents

Thom and Joani Schultz also suggested a plan for change agents. This plan includes:

Explain the need. People are content with their old habits and ways. They will need to understand the problem.

Focus on the gains that will be received with the necessary change. Most people think of what they have to lose by the new change. You must help them focus on what they have to gain instead.

Understand that not everyone will be happy with the change. You cannot please everyone. All progress is made with—and in spite of—people opposing.

Do not try to implement all changes at the same time. Guide your people through the change process one step at a time.

It could also be added: Give the people ownership of the change. Show the people how the change will benefit them.

Change Is Necessary

Rev. J. R. Richardson said, “If we, as a church, will rise to the next level, there must be a change. We must be willing to change.”

It has been said, “The road to the next level is always uphill.”

Change is not easy. Our attitude should reflect a willingness to change in order to achieve success in church growth and world evangelism.

Where do we begin change? The first step is simply—begin. Action is needed. Start today. Tomorrow is too late.

Study Questions

1. List ten reasons why people resist change.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

2. What plan could change agents follow to bring about change? _____

3. Where (or how) do we begin change? _____

Additional Notes