

Church Planting Institute
Confronting The Challenge Of Change



Church Planting Institute

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Confronting the Challenge of Change

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Confronting the Challenge of Change

Introduction

It soon becomes evident, upon entering many churches in the Western world, that significant and substantial change is urgently required. The evidence of this occurs mainly in two areas,

1. The obvious need for a spiritual renewal and a return to the New Testament pattern of church, instead of the traditional religious style that so often pertains today. A fresh impartation of spiritual life is obviously needed.
2. The obvious requirement to update the way the church functions in order to make it a contemporary organisation rather than an outdated and obsolete institution.

The first of these requires spiritual transformation that is usually preceded by acknowledgement, repentance and prayer. (2 Chron 7:14)

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. NKJV

The second, with which we are mainly concerned in this teaching, calls for the courage to acknowledge that rapid change is transpiring all around us and that the church is not immune to the need to adapt itself to its current environment. The effectiveness, or otherwise, of the church is anchored to two requirements. Firstly the need to “earnestly contend for the Faith as it was originally delivered to the fathers.” (Jude 3) Secondly, the realistic need to “serve our contemporary generation according to the Will of God, for that generation.” We cannot possibly serve our generation, unless we first learn how to effectively communicate with it.

Acts 13:22

22 And when He had removed him,(Saul) He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

Acts 13:36

36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; NKJV

The prospect of change is an inevitable factor of life, yet it frequently constitutes an unwelcome challenge to many people who view it as a fearsome threat to their

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security and well being. For many, the concept of change is a frightening one, undesirable and certainly unsought. Yet experience repeatedly confirms that even forced change is often a gateway to greater things in life if faced with the right attitude. Change is not an ogre from which we should hastily flee. It is an opportunity, to be positively confronted. If we allow ourselves to view it negatively as a threat, it could have the power to paralyse or even destroy us. But if we meet it in faith, boldly confronting it with optimistic confidence, it can lead on to much greater things.

Colonel Harland Sanders became an internationally known figure, a universal symbol of success. His portly image, with the goatee beard, white suit and black string tie, has become famous world wide through the statue that stands outside every Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet. This chicken franchise has opened thousands of branches around the globe, giving evidence of the success of the Colonel's product and marketing strategy. How many people realise that at age 65, his business life appeared to be finished?

In earlier years he had operated a small restaurant in a little town. His business did modestly well until the highway on which it stood was re routed, leaving his restaurant on a secondary road. Shortly afterwards he was forced to close it through lack of trade. He was sixty-five and had lost everything. How could he begin all over again at that age?

One morning he received his first Social security check from the government. It was for \$157. As he gazed at it, he rebelled against the idea of becoming solely dependent on social security payments. He began to pray and think, "what can I do?"

Suddenly he remembered his mother's fried chicken recipe, which he had learned as a boy helping his mother by cooking some meals for the family. He remembered how delicious it tasted and how much he had enjoyed it. He set out in his old battered car, to call upon restaurant owners who might franchise his recipe, but met with no success. Eventually he discovered a restaurant in Salt Lake City that accepted his proposition. It was the humble beginning of an immensely successful international franchise that brought fame and fortune to Harland Sanders.

In his later years, then a multi-millionaire, he frequently gave public testimony of his Christian commitment and the manner in which God helped him to become a success in his later years. At sixty five, the unwelcome challenge of enforced change could easily have destroyed him. But he confronted it with faith and it subsequently launched him into the most exciting and rewarding period of his whole life. Change opened the door to far greater things when confronted with the right attitude.

An honest, unbiased appraisal of the average church today will instantly reveal obvious need for change. Many churches are functioning well below their optimum potential. One of the reasons is that their strategies are outmoded and obsolete. They are living in a world of make believe. This is particularly true of churches in the Western World that have lost their relevance to contemporary society. They are in urgent need to honestly and bravely CONFRONT THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE. This teaching on the subject could greatly assist any church or organisation to effectively challenge and tackle those needs to change. It can be used as a charter for

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transition. Where are those leaders brave enough to introduce this book to their congregation encouraging everyone concerned to seriously consider its implications? Why not introduce these concepts as a congregational study to honestly appraise the need for change?

Some Definitions and synonyms:

1. Confront

- 1 to face up to; to stand or meet face to face
- 2 to face or oppose boldly,
- 3 to bring face to face (*with*) [to *confront* one with the facts]

Synonyms: face, meet head on, cope with.

2. Challenge

- 1 a call or dare to take part in a contest, etc.
- 2 a demanding task, that calls for special effort or dedication

3. Change

- 1 to put or take (a thing) in place of something else; substitute for, replace with, or transfer to another of a similar kind [to *change* one's clothes, to *change* jobs]
- 2 a) to cause to become different; alter; transform; convert [success *changed* him] b) to undergo a variation of [leaves *change* color]
- 3 a) to become different; alter; vary [the scene *changes*] b) to undergo alteration or replacement
- 4 to pass from one phase to another, as the moon
- 5 the act or process of substitution, alteration, or variation

SYNONYMS.—

change denotes a making or becoming distinctly different and implies either a radical transmutation of character or replacement with something else [I'll *change* my shoes];

alter implies a less partial change, as in appearance, so that the identity is preserved [to *alter* a garment];

vary suggests irregular or intermittent change [to *vary* one's reading];

modify implies minor change, often so as to limit or moderate [to *modify* the language of a report];

transform implies a change in form and now, usually, in nature or function [to *transform* matter into energy];

transition the process by which transformation is accomplished

convert suggests more strongly change to suit a new function [to *convert* a barn into a house]

The consistence of change

Someone far wiser than I has said, “The most consistent thing in life is change!”

Change and transition have always been an inevitable factor of life. This is true historically of every age and generation. The history of mankind is a constant story of change and development. It is also true individually. Everyone’s life has its changes, transitions and seasons. They are inevitable and inescapable. Without them life would be static, boring and under productive.

**Change may be either positive or negative. For better or for worse!
Every living entity is in a process of change. It is either a process of deterioration leading to obsolescence and decay or of improvement leading to increased effectiveness, relevance and longer life. Change normally has the ability to either make or break. The attitude with which we face it is the determining factor of which it will be.**

Most of the negative changes we experience have come unexpectedly or contrary to our desire. We have often resisted and fought them, being unwilling to accept their inevitability. Some of these may be:-

1. Demotion at work.
2. Redundancy or dismissal from work.
3. Divorce and break up of the family unit.
4. Death of a loved one.
5. Severe financial losses.
6. Bankruptcy.
7. Serious illness

The changes that have proved beneficial are the ones we have anticipated, prepared for and positively initiated. Amongst these are :-

1. Advancement in education opportunities.
2. Acquiring the good job you desired.
3. Promotion within the company.
4. Substantial pay increases.
5. A happy marriage.
6. Expanding family unit.
7. Material advancements. New home or car.

The changes that overtake you without your sanction and against your will are the ones that will destroy you. Those that you anticipate, plan for and initiate are the positive changes that can improve your effectiveness and enhance your performance.

One of the things that everyone must learn early in life is how to positively face and initiate change. Change is probably the most certain inevitability in life. Every person and association must learn how to positively manage it.

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Change is inevitable whether positive or negative. Change **will** happen whether you want it or not. If we face the inevitability negatively it will invariably produce negative results. Those results will be emotional as well as objective.

Some of the emotional negative results are:-

- a. Shock.
- b. Fear.
- c. Bewilderment.
- d. Disappointment.
- e. Depression.
- f. Disillusionment.
- g. Sterility

In contrast, when faced positively and creatively, change will inevitably produce positive emotional factors. E.g.

- a. Positive anticipation.
- b. Excitement.
- c. The adrenalin of challenge.
- d. A sense of adventure. Positively facing the unknown.
- e. New accomplishments.
- f. Bigger and greater results.

Don't be a Ostrich

The Ostrich is often depicted as a foolish bird, who when faced with the prospect of danger, promptly buries its head in the sand and imagines that because it can no longer see the danger, it is not there anymore!

Some people are like this with change. Rather than face the inevitable prospect of change, they pretend the need does not exist. Ignore and it will go away they think. Persuade yourself that everything is fine and that no changes are required, everything will continue as always. These are the kind of deceitful thoughts that can wrongly persuade one that change is unnecessary and avoidable.

Change is not your enemy

Many people, particularly many Christians, view change as an enemy. They resent and resist any prospect of change. The very word demoralises them. It is the last thing they wish to do. Tradition is the way things have always been done within a certain context. Many churches cling steadfastly to tradition often following patterns that have been custom for generations.

Change is actually your friend

Change is the enemy of the mediocre.
Change is the enemy of low productivity.
Change is the enemy of major growth and development.
Change can help you improve.

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Change can help you to grow.

Change can rescue you from the mundane and mediocre.

Change can increase your usefulness and productivity.

Change can transform your future.

When everything seems to be going wrong, positive change is your only hope.

Change is your friend in time of need.

Positive change can improve your lifestyle

There are few people, if any, in this world whose lives cannot be improved in any way. Even fewer who can honestly say, "There is neither need or requirement for improvement in my life. Everything is perfect just the way it is."

There is no person(ality) that could not be improved.

There is no character that could not be enriched.

There is no relationship that cannot be enhanced.

There is no life that cannot become more fruitful and productive.

There is no organisation that requires no change or improvement.

Every situation could benefit from positive change!

There is no church on earth so perfect that nothing could be improved.

**There is no One and nothing
that could not benefit from
positive change!**

God has built change into the rhythm of life. Everything that grows, changes. No change, -no growth. Every thing in nature with which God has invested life, goes through continuous processes of change. Change brings growth, improvement, enhanced productivity, brighter prospects. A hugely successful company in Sydney, Australia had an interesting motto. A slogan that inspired and motivated the directors and employees alike. An maxim that could be adopted by every person and every company. A slogan that could well be adopted by every church. That motto was,

“While I live, I grow.”

**Remember, No growth occurs without change!
Every living organism survives and thrives
By adapting to its environment.**

1. The God of “New things”

Isa 43:18-19

18 *Forget what happened in the past, and do not dwell on events from long ago.*

19 *I am going to do something new. It is already happening. Don't you recognise it?*

This scripture has always excited and challenged me in whatever version of the Scriptures I have read it, but when I first saw it in “God’s Word,” my spirit leapt as never before. (*“God’s Word,” is a translation of the Bible from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. It is a completely new, literally accurate translation which, unlike some modern translations, contains no theological terms passed down from earlier translations. It accurately presents all the meaning the original writers intended.*)

The use of natural, common, current language provides a fresh dynamic impact that makes the verse more relevant to our current context. Its intriguing application of tenses fascinated me and as I delved into its implication I became more excited than ever.

PAST TENSE:

“Forget what happened in the past” is simple, straight forward, and unmistakable.

“Do not dwell on events from long ago” Don’t live in the past. Leave it behind.

FUTURE TENSE:

“I am going to do something new”

PRESENT TENSE:

“It is already happening. Don't you recognise it?”

Several important truths emerge from this rendering.

1. God does not want us to dwell in the past. Forget the past!
2. He wants to do something new in your life.
3. That new thing is already in being. It is already happening in the Spirit.
4. If you will recognise, acknowledge and embrace it by faith, it will begin to happen in your life.
5. If you insist on hanging on to the past, you will not be able to grasp the new thing that God wants to accomplish.

My friend,

- God wants do something new in your life and ministry.
- It will be greater than anything that has happened to you so far.
- As far as God is concerned, it is already happening because He both wills and desires it.
- You must recognise it. See it in the spirit with the eyes of faith.
- Pray about it positively.
- Clarify it. Wait on God until it is clear and focused in your spirit.
- Commit yourself wholly to achieving it.
- Communicate it. Begin to share it with your peers and associates.
- Strategise it. Make plans and preparations for its fulfilment.
- Activate it. Get it off the drawing board and into action.

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Undoubtedly the greatest challenge that confronts the church today is the challenge of change. The world scene is changing rapidly in every sphere. Much of that change is good and lots of it is bad. The great challenge that confronts us is to discern the manner in which the church should face those changes. Many church leaders and organisations are resistant to any and all change, yet there are many legitimate changes that are long overdue as we move rapidly into the 21st century. If the church is to retain any credibility, it must be willing to recognise its need to be contemporary (relevant to its times.) God is not old fashioned, out of date, behind the times, He is the "I AM" the God of the eternal present. We need to be in harmony with God's present truth and purpose. God is both prophetic and futuristic.

Relatively few people feel comfortable with change. Most feel a certain security in things the way they have always known them. The rapidly changing world is bewildering and it challenges our sense of security and well being. This is particularly true in the Christian context where important historic events, e.g. Christ's life, death and resurrection, are still powerfully integral to our present world view. The fact is that change is transpiring and we cannot deny or alter that. Certain fundamental changes must take place in the church in order to maintain a vital relevance and effectiveness in our modern world.

Positive and productive change should be initiated from the top by the leadership. Leaders who are unwilling to change may find themselves forfeiting the exciting opportunities that presently exist in our changing world.

When you are through changing, you are through!

What God is saying, through Jeremiah (43:18) is "*do not hold tenaciously to the past because I am doing a new thing and if you insist in hanging on to the past, you will not be able to grasp (lay hold of) My new thing.*"

A simple analogy might be that of a trapeze artist, swinging from one trapeze to the next. If he is unwilling to let go of the first swing, he will not be able to grasp the second. He will therefore keep swinging in ever decreasing arcs until he finally loses all momentum.

Release the past and reach out to the future

We must release our tenacious hold upon the past in order to reach forward to lay hold upon the future that God is unveiling. Paul understood this principle when he said.

"Brethren, I do not consider that I have fully arrived, but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, I reach forward to those things which are ahead."
Phil 3:13

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He refused to live in or hold on to the past, determining to forget those things that are behind and to consistently press forward towards the future. He understood that we cannot live in both the past and the future. If we hold on to one, we forfeit the other.

If the church is not willing to release the past and press on into all that God has for us in the future, then the people will not wholly possess their inheritance.

As we rapidly move into the 21st Century, we have entered a period of dramatic, swift, exponential change, an irreversible phenomena which greatly challenges every aspect of human life, particularly that of the Church. **If we do not recognise its huge implications and adequately cope with this phenomena, some Churches may forfeit much of their future inheritance.**

**The ability or inability to
successfully initiate positive change
will prove to be the
ultimate test of a leader's effectiveness.**

Many Christians are paranoid about change, yet the Gospel is inevitably about change. The plain fact is that no growth or development can take place in any dimension of life without change and transition. It is certainly obvious, in the processes of life, that our major development transpires in times of crisis, change and transition. Whether we like it or not, it is usually in the crucible of crisis that meaningful changes are introduced into our lives. We need to keep alert to the winds of change that the Holy Spirit introduces into our circumstances.

**Teaching that does not accomplish change
has failed in its objective.**

Life is composed of changes

Our lives are composed of a series of changes, each period with its particular challenges, stretching influences, and rites of passage. This is true of our natural life and of our spiritual development. The phases of natural development are:-

1. Birth. A baby learns more in its first year of existence than in any subsequent year.
2. Childhood. 2-12 years.
3. Adolescence. 13-19 years
4. Young personhood. 20-30 years.
5. Early maturity. 30-40 years.
6. Advancing years. 40-60yrs.
7. Senior years. 60 onwards.

The phases of spiritual development are:-

1. Babes in Christ. 1 Peter 2:2.

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2. Little children. 1 John 2:12.
3. Young personhood. 1 John 2:14.
4. Fathers and mothers in Christ. 1 John 2:13. 1 Tim 5:2.

Without change, there is no development

**All progress requires change.
Achieving perfection requires many changes.**

We must not therefore, hide from the challenge of change. We should embrace it positively by faith. We should welcome change as an opportunity for further development and greater effectiveness.

A useful little acronym can be made from the word, **CHANGE**:-

Constantly
Having
A
New
Growing
Experience.

Conversion and Sanctification, are both radical changes

Some of the earliest change phases are presented in

Acts 3:19-20

19 *"Repent therefore and be converted,(changed) that your sins may be blotted out,(erased and forgotten) so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, (NKJ)*

This scripture presents five sources of transforming power for the Christian.

1. Repentance means change

"CHANGE YOUR MENTAL ATTITUDE."

For many Christians, repentance has assumed very religious connotations such as Weeping, Crying out, Begging forgiveness, Sackcloth and ashes, Seriousness, Sombreness, Downcast, Sadness, and Legalism.

But *Metanoia*: (The Greek word for repentance) has many other than religious applications. It means to reconsider. Change your mental attitude. Think (and act) differently afterwards. Undergo a Radical change of mind. Embrace a brand new perspective.

2. Conversion means change

Greek: *Epistrepho* ' "To revert (to God's ways) figuratively, morally, literally. About turn! To change or adapt into another form, character or function. True conversion has a very radical connotation.

2 Cor 5:17 *"If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. Old things have passed away; all things have become new."*

The new convert does not simply become religious, reading the bible and attending some church. There is meant to be an actual transformation. They truly meant to become a new person. The changes are not merely peripheral. They are not simply changes in outward appearance. Conversion begins in the deepest part of one's being and utterly transforms the whole life as it works its way out in every day life and relationships. If any person or group of people should be open to change it ought to be Christians and churches, because real Christianity is a dynamic transformation. Christians ought not to be merely open to change. They should be dynamic agents of change!

Conversional transformation does not all happen at one time. It is an ongoing process. Its effectiveness surfaces in the crises experiences of life, when God causes all things to work together for good, to those that love Him and are called according to His divine purposes. (Rom 8:28)

The Apostles discovered this truth in some of their greatest extremities. For example, Peter experienced it at a time that Satan's attack on him was at its strongest.

Luke 22:31-32

31 *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as*

wheat:

32 *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen (Sterizo: turn them resolutely in another direction) thy brethren.*

Jesus surrounded Peter with His prayer at that time, that his faith should not fail or prove inadequate. He confidently forecast, "When you are converted (changed, strengthened, transformed) you will then be able also to help your peers to go in the right direction too. Jesus knew that in the midst of this deep trial, when Satan planned to sift Peter through his fingers like wheat, Peter would be transformed into a stronger believer and be better able to encourage and instruct his fellow believers in the life of faith and victory.

3. Blotting out sins means eradicating the past

Exhaleipho. Erased, Obliterated, Blotted out, Washed away by Christ's Blood.

The atonement of Christ does not merely "cover over" our sins. It eradicates and obliterates them completely. They are destroyed. They exist no more. They are now to be completely forsaken and forgotten. Unfortunately, many Christians are like Lazarus, bound hand and foot with grave clothes. They have committed their lives to

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Christ and accepted His forgiveness but they have not understood how totally God has wiped out their transgressions. Consequently the enemy is constantly referring them to the awareness of their memory. He taunts them with sins of the past. He seeks to destroy their confidence and authority. But, as with Lazarus, Jesus commands, "Loose him and set him free!" God has cast the record of our past sins into an ocean of forgetfulness. He remembers them no more. We must do the same. Let the past be buried and forgotten so that we can inherit our new future. A Christian can never begin to manifest the righteousness of Christ until they have completely renounced and released their sinful past into oblivion.

The word for sins in this verse is *Hamartia* meaning to fall short of, i.e. short comings, character blemishes, inherited weaknesses. Not only have we forgiveness for the sins of the past, we also have redemption and release from potential sins of the present. There are sins of the flesh and of the spirit. The sins of the flesh are usually very obvious, but those of the spirit may be covert and hidden. They are spiritual pride, self righteousness, self sufficiency, resistance towards God, kicking against the pricks. (Acts 9:5) God is more grieved by the sins of **His** children than those of the devil's children.

The Apostle Paul, an outstanding example of dedicated, effective Christian living, continually re focussed his determination to forget and move on from his past, into God's beckoning future. He refused to stagnate. He constantly strove into the new future that God's grace had provided.

Phil 3:13-14

13 No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God is calling us up to heaven because of what Christ Jesus did for us. TLB

If we are not constantly manifesting positive change, we are not growing. In fact we are probably already spiritually dead.

4. Times of refreshing transform the soul

"Times of refreshing" means to recover your breath with a fresh breath of air.

The word for "presence" i.e. *prosopon*, = **face** of the Lord. Just as God breathed into Adam the breath of lives and man became a living soul, (Gen 2:7) so the breath of God's presence restores and transforms our fainting souls. Pentecost came as a mighty, rushing wind from heaven. (Acts 2:2.) The wind of God's Spirit today comes as a strong breeze, breathing fresh life into everything it touches. The breath of refreshing is like spiritual "mouth to mouth" resuscitation from the face of the Lord.

Likewise, as we behold God, face to face, in spiritual communion, we are changed, transformed, altered, mutated, into His image. As we gaze on Him face to face, we are changed into His image.

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2 Cor 3:18 *“But we all with open face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being changed into that same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.”*

5. TOTALLY changed! When we see Christ

Our final transformation, the grand finale of all the present processes of change, will finally transfigure us into the perfect image of Christ.

1 Cor 15:51-52

51 *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed--*
52 *in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (NIV)*

1 Jn 3:2

2 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. (KJV)*

More frightening than change

Frightening as the prospect of change may be for many people, there is something much more scary than change. I refer to the possibility that nothing will change! Most of us are in situations that desperately need to be changed and we should be more afraid that nothing will change than that many things will.

Can you honestly examine your life and ministry and say, “Everything is great. Nothing could be improved. Nothing needs to be changed. Everything is ideal?”

Can you examine the church over which you are the leader and express the same sentiments? Can you honestly say, “There is neither room nor need for any changes, everything is just right the way it is?” Personally, I am greatly encouraged by the belief that God has some exciting new things in mind for me. However good things may be, God always has something better. No matter how successful and effective our organisation may be, God can, (and wants to) make it even better. He wants to initiate change. He wants us to move on, away from the past and into His glorious future. Glorious because He has designed and determined it.

My friend, “If nothing changes, everything will remain the same.” Can you afford for that to happen? Unless your life and your life work has reached its absolute peak and you are definitely functioning at the very zenith of your abilities and of God’s Grace, then things can be changed for the better. Things can be improved and the remainder of your life can be more effective and fruitful than all the preceding years until now.

**If nothing changes,
Everything will
remain the same!**

2. Change is an integral, inevitable fact of life

We are introduced to the Divinely instigated principle of change from the very beginning of creation. Nature confirms this. Every living thing changes as it grows.

God changed chaos into order

Gen 1:2

2 *Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (NIV)*

He changed night into day

Gen 1:3-5

3 *And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

4 *God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.*

5 *God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning-- the first day. (NIV)*

He established the changing seasons

Gen 1:11-12

11 *Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.*

12 *The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. (NIV)*

The vast universe that God created is a constantly moving, changing pattern of bodies in the gigantic space of eternity. The sun, moon, stars, planets and constellations are constantly in motion.

Both secular and biblical history substantiate the phenomena of change

As Heraclitus said, five hundred years before Christ,

“The only permanent thing in life is change.”

The processes of change are implicit in every living thing that God created. Nothing develops and grows except through ordered processes of change, transition and transformation. Since its inception the world has been going through various processes of change. It is an inevitable and inescapable factor of life. There is no point in hiding, or running from it for it is bound to catch up with you.

The processes of change have rapidly accelerated in our day

Bible Prophecy predicts it. Matt 24:22 “*Except those days be shortened*” — ‘accelerated’ “In the last days!” —Accelerated change.

Dan 12:4 .”*at the time of the end, many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase.*” (Rabah = increase exceedingly)

The processes of change have been enormously accelerated in the past few years. New developments are transpiring at an exponential rate. The world is charging into the future like a nuclear powered rocket. It is moving forward like an irresistible tide.

“We live in a moment of history where change is so speeded up that we begin to see the present only when it is already disappearing.”

R. D. LAING (1927–)

Every region of the world will be affected.

Every organisation, company, and institution will be affected

Every aspect of life is affected by:-

Political change

e.g. The Fall of Marxism and the disintegration of the Communist dream of world wide domination is the most dramatic political change in recent years. There are many other radical and far reaching changes transpiring in the world of governance. The number of nations that have gained independence and statehood since World War II, has reshaped the political globe. This is in direct fulfilment of Bible prophecy in which Jesus predicted the emergence of young nations at the time of Israel’s new statehood.

Luke 21:29-31

29 *He told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees.*

30 *When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.*

31 *Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. (NIV)*

The fig tree obviously referred to Israel. It is a symbol of that nation. Jesus was saying that the blossoming again of Israel, would be a sign of the nearness of God’s Kingdom reign. But He also said, “*and all the trees,*” referring to many other nations that would achieve statehood in that same period of time.

Scientific and Technological development

Huge changes have been initiated with the emergence of the Computer Age and all the startling innovations spawned by this. Space travel has become a reality, and the

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so-called information highway threatens to change the pattern of life forever.

The development of science and technology in the past fifty years has been breathtaking. Man is presently able to produce machines that were always regarded as science fiction until now. Every branch of technology and science is making tremendous breakthroughs and the pattern of human life is being irreversibly transformed.

Economic changes

There have been tremendous changes in world economics. Centres of economic power have shifted from the West to the East. The full significance of these changes has not yet been recognised. The economic strength of world society is both stronger and weaker than ever before. The wealth of the nations has multiplied enormously, yet this position of wealth is manifestly fragile and any one of a dozen factors could utterly destroy its strength. People everywhere are having to adjust to the economic and monetary changes that are rapidly transpiring. This trend will not revert back. It will accelerate with ever increasing speed.

Societal transformation

Immense sociological changes are transpiring in the world. The gigantic moves of population from rural to urban areas constitute only one small part of the huge social experiment that is taking place. Mankind has new and fresh expectations of life. The old norms and castes of society have gone forever, yet nothing has yet appeared to adequately take their place. Mankind is inexorably involved in a enormous whirlpool of change.

Religious Vacuums

Many world religions are undergoing both intensification (fundamentalism) and disenchantment. Huge vacuums are opening up in the religious world scene. As the pressure and intensity of life increases in the end times, men will begin a frantic and frenzied search for spiritual security. The religious pillars of human society will disintegrate as the Samson syndrome in the Kingdom of God destroys the pillars of the temples of the religious masses. Gigantic belief systems will suddenly crumble to dust and men and women will cry out for the true God and spiritual reality.

Spiritual Outpouring

“The Spirit will be poured out on all flesh.”

In retrospect it will become obvious that the greatest changes that have transpired in these momentous times, will be those associated with the fulfilment of God’s prophetic purposes. The program of God will impact every area of the universe, as those things that He says, “*Shall come to pass in the last days,*” are enacted in our day. The world wide outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit will impact every area of life on planet earth.

All of these changes impact powerfully on the perceptions of our contemporary society. They are all dynamic formative influences, determining to some degree how people perceive life. They also determine what issues people are thinking about and

what is relevant and important to them. These are all matters on which we need to be informed so that we can speak to people in a language and voice they understand.

3. No one resents and resists change like the church

The traditional church, for the most part, is determined to stand fast, resisting all potential change. A visiting preacher was introduced to an elderly deacon who had held that office for forty years. “My” the preacher said, “You must have seen a lot of changes take place here.” “That’s true” said the deacon, “And I’ve resisted every one of them!”

Why does the Church always resist change?

Churches see the old as sacred, the modern as sacrilegious. Their hymn books are “ancient and modern.” But more ancient than modern! The Western Church is mired in the past. (Buildings, hymns, liturgies, vision.) It professes to be a marching army, but its feet are stuck in the mud of tradition.

Many of the institutions around us are changing rapidly to stay relevant with their world. Some technology industries are racing forward into the future at a breath taking pace. But the church keeps plodding along at the same old pace. It refuses to change its rhythm or cadence for anyone or anything. Its signature tune which used to be

**Like a mighty Army,
Moves the Church of God.
Brothers we are treading,
Where the Saints have trod.**

Now seems to be

**Like a ponderous tortoise,
Moves the church of God.
Brothers we are treading
Where we’ve always trod.**

Why???

Our Faith is historic

Christianity was founded 2,000 years ago. As we study our historic Faith our minds are constantly dwelling on events that transpired 2,000 years ago, therefore, in our thoughts, we live in the ancient past. We tend to see the early church as an ideal model of church life and practise, but we often forget one important thing about that church, that it was always contemporary and relevant to its day and setting.

Our Bible is ancient

Much of our Bible was originally written thousands of years ago. Even the New Testament was written almost 2,000 years ago. So our reading and study of the scriptures constantly takes our minds back into the historic past. Many of the versions of the scriptures are also several hundred years old. The King James version, which is still preferred by many pastors, was written in 1611. Its expressions are the language of that day and as a result “King James English” has been revered as some kind of sacred language and is still widely used in many churches today. Actually it is no more sacred than modern English, yet our frequent use of it tends to suggest that old English is more sacred and spiritual than our modern tongue. Many therefore have a tendency to pray and prophesy in King James English as though it were more “spiritual,” which is not true.

We cling to religious traditions.

Much of our Christian culture is comprised of human tradition rather than biblical concept. We have become like the Pharisees of Christ’s day who “*made the commandments of God of none effect by their vain traditions received of men.*” Matt. 15:3 Mark 7:5

Much of what the modern church clings to, as though defending the true faith, is actually the traditions that men have introduced into Christianity since its founding by Jesus Christ. The church often mistakes ancient culture for religious righteousness. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees of His day for doing this and I suspect that He feels the same way towards us as we religiously cling to man made traditions.

We suspect and resist any kind of change

Entrenched in ancient culture and tradition, many church leaders see a contemporary view as a betrayal of their Faith. Anything “modern” is suspect. Any attempt to be relevant to our times is viewed as a compromise of our Faith and spiritual authenticity.

The church of Jesus Christ was not meant to be an old fashioned, obsolete, behind the times people, we are intended to be a prophetic people. A people of the future. God does not want His people to be constantly dragging along behind, not able to keep up with all the changes that are transpiring. He wants us to be right in the fore-front, indicating the path that the nations should take.

As God brought His people out of Egypt and towards their Promised Land, He had to constantly stir them afresh. They made themselves comfortable even in the wilderness and He had to break them out of their comfort zones. God had to take the pillar and cloud of His presence onward continually, encouraging His flock to press on with Him towards their inheritance. He had to challenge and stir them as at Mount Seir.

Deut 2:1-3

I Then we turned back and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, as the LORD had directed me. For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir.

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2 *Then the LORD said to me,*
3 *"You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now*
turn north. (NIV)

I firmly believe that God is trying to move His people on today too. All who are living in the past, its successes, or failures, God is endeavouring to move along into the present and into the future. We have been encompassing the same mountain area long enough. We are dizzy with marking time and marching in circles. We need to press forward fearlessly into the future with God and discover His new purposes.

Much unwillingness to change is due to lack of faith

Faith is necessarily flexible. It is an agent of positive change. It does not guard the status quo, it changes and transforms circumstances and situations. There is always an element of risk in change as in faith. Many Christians do not like risk. We are too comfortable and feel secure with what we know in the present. The future has a vein of the unknown of which we are afraid. However, whether we like it or not, change is taking place, and we must face it, not in fear, but in faith.

Whatever excuses churches and Christians may offer for not moving on into the contemporary present, beneath many of those excuses is often a lack of faith. There is nothing sinful, carnal or wicked in being relevant to our times. A committed and faithful Christian can be a modern minded person too. Someone who is aware and abreast of what is transpiring in the real world and yet wholly committed to seeing God's present and future purposes fulfilled.

King David won a special commendation from God for his determination to be contemporary and to truly serve his own generation according to God's Will.

Acts 13:36

36 *"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;"* (NKJ)

Within this statement there is a definite inference that David's usefulness to God was decidedly linked with his relevance to his generation. David was immortal, until his task was completed. He obviously had an acute awareness of his generation and the times in which they lived. He understood their generational perceptions and how they thought and felt about things. He related to his peers, understood their concerns and spoke their language. Nevertheless in no way did he compromise his ability to fulfil the generational purpose for which God had originally called him all those years ago. David had only been a callow youth at that time. Between then and the later period when he eventually began to fulfil God's purpose, many things must have changed in Israel and amongst her surrounding neighbours. David obviously remained vitally aware of these changes and their implications and he was better able to serve God because of this.

Walking into some churches today is like stepping into a time warp. It is like going back into time some fifty years or more. So many of the church's perceptions and activities are grounded in obsolete concepts. Sadly the pastors and members lack the faith required to break out of their cocoon and move into the real world. Strangely

they feel that the old fashioned way of doing things is somehow more sacred than the modern. The services are conducted in Victorian style English. The liturgy is from a prayer book written in the distant past. The music is frequently archaic as though all recent music is tarnished with carnality.

Many churches are “stuck in the mud”

4. God is not afraid of change

God never changes:

There are numerous scriptures that affirm the unchangeable nature of God. E.g.

God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’ This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.” (Exodus 3:14-15, NIV)

Exodus 3:14-15

The name by which God reveals Himself. **“I AM”**

The name I AM reveals God as the Eternal God.

He is not the “I was” (past) nor the “I shall be” (future) but the great eternal I AM. (The eternally present and relevant One)

A name that denotes what He is in Himself (v. 14): “I am that I am.” This explains His name Jehovah, and signifies,

- (1.) That He is self-existent; He has his being of Himself, and has no dependence upon any other: I am that I am. Being self-existent, He cannot but be self-sufficient, and therefore all-sufficient.
- (2.) That He is eternal and unchangeable, and always the same, yesterday, today, and for ever; He will be what he will be and what he is; see Rev. 1:8.
- (3) That He is the God of all generations. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jehovah is the everlasting, eternal God, constant and consistent which is why He never changes.
- (4) God has not grown old with the passing of time, for He is not subject to time. As the Eternal God, He is always the same. He does not alter nor change.

Eternity has no gray hairs! The flowers fade, the heart withers, man grows old and dies, the world lies down in the sepulchre of ages, but time writes no wrinkles on the brow of eternity. REGINALD HEBER (1783–1826)

THE ETERNAL GOD IS ALWAYS RELEVANT

Jehovah Ha' Olam, the eternal God, or the God of eternity, is utterly relevant to every portion of eternity and to every generation that ever lived in time. He is never old fashioned, obsolete, out of date, behind the times. He is eternally relevant, at all times. He is the God of the NOW eternally.

The created world is but a small parenthesis in eternity.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE (1605–1682)

Eternity is the ocean; time is the wave.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK (1862–1949)

Mal 3:6. *“I am the LORD, I change not.”*

(His nature, character, disposition, laws and purposes do not change.)

The statement, “I change NOT.”

refers specifically to God’s character, His keeping of Covenants and His original purpose and plan.

It does not refer to His ways and methods of accomplishing those purposes, for God frequently changed those.

**God never
changes, but
His methods
do!**

James 1:17

17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. (NIV)

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.” Heb 13:8

God’s laws never change

E.g. Laws of nature, gravity, aerodynamics etc.

Modern science is just discovering some of the basic, foundational laws of God.

Johannes Kepler, the famous scientist said, “Scientific research is basically thinking God’s thoughts after Him.”

Many naïve Christians think that because God does not change, He is therefore against change. The reason that God does not change is

- He is perfect and cannot be improved.
- He is totally relevant to everything and does not need to be updated.
- His knowledge is complete, He cannot learn anything.

Unfortunately, the same is not true of us, nor of the church.

- We are fallible.
- Our knowledge is incomplete.
- There is much room for improvement.
- There is considerable need for improvement.

The immutability of God appears in its most perfect beauty when viewed against the mutability of men. In God no change is possible; in men change is impossible to escape. Neither the man is fixed nor his world, and he and it are in constant flux.

A. W. TOZER (1897–1963)

God's methods and strategies change

**Methods are many,
Principles are few.
Methods always change,
Principles never do!**

Anonymous

**The old order changeth, yielding place to the new,
And God fulfills himself in many ways.**

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Ex 3:16. “*I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*”

The God of succeeding generations and changing circumstances.

His methods in conquering and possessing the promised land changed from place to place. E.g. The conquest of Canaan, Jericho, Ai etc.

God valued and appreciated David because he “*served his generation according to the Will of God*” Acts 13:36.

The Bible narrative clearly shows that God adjusts Himself to every period of time. Though He remains the same, He reveals Himself afresh to every generation.

1. He revealed Himself to Abram, Gen 12:1-3; Acts 7:2-4. To initiate the Abrahamic Covenant.
2. He revealed Himself afresh to Moses. Ex 3:2-6. To initiate the Mosaic Covenant.
3. He revealed Himself to David. 2 Sam 7:1-29. To initiate the Davidic Covenant.
4. He reveals Himself through Christ in the New Covenant. Heb 8:13; 12:24.
5. He revealed Himself through Martin Luther as the God who justifies through faith.
6. He revealed Himself through John Wesley as the God who sanctifies.
7. He revealed Himself as the God of World missions through William Carey.
8. He has revealed Himself as the Holy Ghost Baptiser through the Pentecostal/Charismatic revivals.
9. He will reveal Himself as the God of all flesh. Joel 2:28; Isa 40:5; Psa 65:2.
10. He will reveal Himself as King of kings, Lord of lords. Rev. 11:15.

Although God is altogether changeless and unchanging, He reveals Himself afresh at different times in history as totally relevant to those circumstances. He is the God of proceeding generations. (Ex 3:6) The God who is totally germane and relevant to every period of history. He is certainly not like a bewildered old gentleman who has become overwhelmed with the plethora of new innovations. He is not struggling vainly to cope with the information age. He is the God of the 21st century. The God

of eternity. It is not He who has to keep up with us, but we who need to keep pace with Him.

5. Why churches resist change

A mistaken belief

Many Christians have a mistaken belief that “the old is better.” Jesus mentioned this tendency, “*And no one, having drunk old wine, desires new; for he says, the old is better.*” Luke 5:39 He mentions it in the context of explaining that it is unwise to put new wine into old (brittle) bottles, because the old bottles will undoubtedly burst and the wine will be wasted. He further adds that “*new wine must be put into new wine skins, and both will be preserved.*” Luke 5:38

The word He uses for “new,” is *Kainos*, which means renewed, or restored to as new condition. Jesus is referring to a process whereby old (skin) bottles can be renewed and perform task usually reserved for new skins. The process involved soaking the old skins in water for several days until they are thoroughly moistened again. Removing them from the water they are then subjected to a vigorous rubbing in of olive oil. A massaging with oil until it thoroughly impregnates and softens the skin making it supple and strong again.

**Our old wineskins
can be renewed
again.**

This process has a spiritual counterpart by which old skins, made brittle through having hung in a smoky tent too long, are first immersed in water (the Word of God) for a considerable period and then subjected to a fresh anointing with oil. (the Holy Spirit) The result of this process is a renewal of the wine skin to the degree that it is again able to contain the dynamic quality of new wine. Many Christians need to experience such a renewing in order to effectively cope with the challenges of change. Their old, legalistic attitudes are too brittle, inflexible and fragile to receive and contain the volatile nature of change. Therefore the skins must undergo some spiritual renovation to enable them to embrace change and advance into the developing purposes of God.

Satisfied with the status quo

It is often the quest for improvement and fulfilment that leads people into the processes of change. However, when people are happy and content with things the way they are, they see no need for change. Improving things means making changes and many people are unwilling to acknowledge the need for improvement and change.

**“Progress is impossible without change
and those who cannot change their minds
cannot change anything.”**

Mired in traditions

Thomas Jefferson said, “In matters of principle, stand like a rock; in matters of taste, swim with the current.” “Youth for Christ” an international ministry to young people, has an excellent motto that emphasises the need for both steadfastness and change, “Anchored to the rock and geared to the times.” This is an excellent concept that every Christian organisation should adopt.

Unwilling to leave their security zone

Many people have fashioned for themselves a “comfort zone” i.e. a life style that is as convenient and comfortable as possible. The prospect of change always threatens that comfortable existence and people tend to try to dodge the inconvenience that transition so often brings.

**There is nothing wrong with change
if it is in the right direction.
To improve is to change
so to become perfect is to
change often.**

Sir Winston Churchill.

Worshipping “sacred cows and white elephants.”

“Sacred cows” are pet traditions that are deeply rooted in our societies. Church bodies often have many of them. Habits and traditions of men that have become deeply entrenched and usually have no biblical basis. They are “the traditions of men” that Jesus said “make void the word of God.”

“White elephants” are venerated objects or projects that are expensive to maintain but relatively non-productive. The King of Siam supposedly gave white elephants to members of his court he wished to ruin. The creatures were sacred and not allowed to work, —yet they still had to be fed and cared for.

Many of these religious traditions have become so sacred that people will frequently fight to hold on to them. Most of these traditions are meaningless, particularly to the man in the street who cannot see any value or purpose in so many of them. They often become a barrier between Christians and their world. We need to be willing to either kill them or put them out to pasture.

Unwilling to take risks

Initiating change often involves taking some risk. It usually involves unknown factors and we must frequently step from the security of the known into the uncertainty of a changed situation. Some leaders, for various reasons, are not willing to take any risks, but the exercise of faith invariably entails doing so.

Processing through the transitions of change is rather like swinging from one trapeze to another. No doubt you have seen this exercise somewhere. The artist swings out on one trapeze with the intention of switching to the next. The timing for this must be perfect. He must release his hold on the first trapeze in order to grasp the second. Any hesitation or delay will ruin the exercise and send him plunging to the net below. Any fear of the risk involved will spoil the required flow. If the artist does not relinquish the first trapeze at the critical moment the chance of a smooth transition may be lost.

**You must release the
past, in order to
grasp the future.**

Many leaders are afraid to release their hold on the past in order to effectively grasp the future. They have lost the spirit of adventure that is always present in the exercise of faith.

Faith must be exercised

Paul says that *“Faith is the evidence of things not yet seen.”* (Heb 11:1)

There is usually a “risk factor” involved in the exercise of faith as there is in the initiation of changes. We have no guarantee but our faith, which we trust is based on what we perceive to be God’s word.

It takes faith to go forward in God. It was not God’s highest purpose or desire that the Israelites should wander for forty years in the wilderness. They did not take so long because that was God’s Will, but because of their reticence and unbelief. Their fear of the giants was greater than their desire to inherit God’s purpose for them. Many of them even yearned to return to Egypt, quickly forgetting the ignominy of slavery they had suffered there for four hundred years.

They had reached a place of compromise where it seemed easier to remain in the wilderness with all its imperfections then rise up in faith again to possess their inheritance. The generation of those that failed to rise up in faith, died in the wilderness. It was the following generations that God eventually brought in to possess the land.

In our generation there are many that will die in the wilderness. But God will raise up Calebs and Joshuas and a new generation that will follow them. These are those who will march in to take the land.

6. How to cope with change

Recognise, acknowledge and accept its inevitability.

Many people resent and resist the need to make changes. We must recognise that changes in life are inevitable. They are not to be dodged or resisted but to be confronted with faith and confidence in God. The progression of growth is change. No living thing can grow, become productive and develop maturity without consistent

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change. The whole normal process of life inevitably involves continuous change alteration, modification, adjustment and transformation. Without change there can be no progress, development, or improvement. Nothing in all living creation remains static. It is alarming to consider that the opposite of growth and progress is inescapably deterioration.

God is never surprised or overwhelmed by change

Many Christians have a sub-conscious image of God as an elderly gentleman who is innately old fashioned. This is far from the truth. God is not old fashioned, antiquated or obsolete. He is the eternal God of the past, present and future. God is not only up to date, He is decidedly futuristic. No change that will ever occur will take God by surprise or catch Him off balance. So many sincere Christians have an idea if that if a thing is modern it cannot possibly have God's approval. They think that by remaining quaint and old fashioned in their view of life, they are somehow more spiritual than others. Many sincere Christians and churches are endeavouring to live by 1,800 standards in the 21st Century. The result can only be stoic stagnation.

**God is never
taken
by surprise!**

Understand that all change is not negative, carnal or sinful

Although much of the change that is transpiring in the world is part of the decay to which the world has been subjected because of the Fall, not all change is negative. Many good changes are transpiring in the world too. Life is improving in many ways. Some change is definitely for the worst, but much is for the best. We need to prayerfully discern those changes that are positive able to better facilitate the spread of the Gospel and take advantage of them.

Future change must be faced with faith in God, His Word, His purposes, His inevitable triumph, and His manifest Kingdom (Rom 8:28)

Someone has said of God, that history is His-story. The sovereign God of the universe is in total control of the unfolding saga of human history. The Bible predicts that in the last days there will be many fearful changes in the world and a general deterioration of life, morals and standards. But the unveiling of God's glorious kingdom will ultimately eclipse all the gloom and despair that may fill the earth before the Return of Christ. Whatever ill the future may bring the ultimate reality will be the unveiling of God's eternal, glorious kingdom.

We must be steadfast, yet flexible, like a tree. Ps 1:3

3 *And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. (KJV)*

A tree that is planted by the riverside develops a deep and powerful root system that tends to make that tree unmoveable. But its trunk and branches remain flexible and pliable, able to bend with the strong winds that may blow against it. This is how we

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must be, and how we must face the winds of change that blow against us. Solidly anchored into God's Word by a powerful root system yet with branches that are always supple and pliable.

Paul alludes to this same idea

1 Cor 15:58

58 *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (NKJ)*

He first appeals to his brethren to be solid in their Faith, steadfast and unmoveable. He then changes his request and urges them to always abound, Gk: "perisseuo" a hyper superlative meaning to superabound. To be excessive in abounding. To cause superabounding to excel. To get into overdrive!

The two exhortations seem contradictory unless we view them according to the analogy of our tree.

The root system and lower trunk is to remain solid, steadfast, immovable, sunk deeply into the ground of God's unchanging Word.

But the upper trunk and branches are to stay flexible, vibrant and pliable.

The ACE paradigm

In the business and commercial world today many changes are transpiring to keep abreast of changes in the market place. The processes of upgrading, updating, changing methods and transforming strategies has been called "Re-engineering."

Some of the experts in this field have evolved what is known as the ACE paradigm, involving **A**ligning, **C**reating and **E**mpowering.

Aligning

Many companies have seen the need to align resources, particularly human resources, in order to create a shared sense of values and objectives in the pursuit of a greater effectiveness. This is a strategy to maximise team spirit and the synergistic effort that can only be released through a team that is truly united for the fulfilment of its common vision. Many huge corporations are merging to produce alignment on a large scale. The companies that emerge have far greater purchasing power and therefore a much greater leverage on the market.

So far the churches have obviously never realised that their divided resources severely restrict their potential impact on the world. The many different denominations are still endeavouring to do their religious things separately. They are either unaware of how much greater their impact would be if they would network together and unite their resources. Or they are simply not willing to discard their differences and present a united front to the world.

Christ prayed an especially powerful prayer concerning this

John 17:20-21

20 *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,*

21 *that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.* (NIV)

He made it very clear that until the believers in His Church and Kingdom are truly ONE, they will not succeed in convincing the world that God has truly sent Christ.

Create

The unity of purpose mentioned above, creates a new structure in the work force. The big bosses at the top are no longer the only ones who make meaningful and strategic decisions. In the new hierarchy, helpful policy making suggestions and vital assistance may come from much further down the old, traditional totem pole.

The message this sends to the modern church is that the big shots, (ordained clergy, Bishops, Archbishops etc.) are never going to do the job alone. In the new paradigm, the so-called laity hold an important, influential and indispensable role in the process of evangelism and church growth. The primary biblical task of the "clergy" has always been to prepare and equip the "laity" for the work of the ministry. Unfortunately this has usually in theory rather than practice. Now is the prophetic time to turn theory into practice. Ministers must concentrate as never before on training the saints for the work of the ministry.

Eph 4:10-12

11. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12. to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up NIV

Empower

Empowerment means the authorising of the new work force to get on with the task before them. Companies that will reap the harvest of the world's huge markets of the future will undoubtedly be those who realise their success is predicated on the training, development and empowering of all the people in the company.

For the Church of Jesus Christ, this comes down to the training, authorising and releasing of their members for the work of building the Body of Christ throughout the earth. The Army of the Lord is presently restricted to guard duty at the barracks, primarily because they have never been properly trained for offensive warfare. The time has now come to see that army arise, "awesome as an army with the banners of victory hoisted High." (Song of Sol 6:4)

7. Leadership and change

Leaders must recognise inevitable need for legitimate change

**The Sons of
Issachar
understood the
significance of
the days in
which they
lived**

Though the sons of Issachar were few in number they played a leading role in the life, movements and events of their nation, because they “*understood the significance of their times and knew what Israel ought to do.*”

1 Chron 12:32

32 *And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment. (KJV)*

Leaders are responsible for some degree of prophetic insight into the future. One vital aspect of all effective leadership is the ability to foresee future trends and formulate appropriate strategies. Many businesses have failed through a lack of this ability and many churches and ministries have missed opportunities to achieve great things because of an inability to foresee the future or an unwillingness to act on prophetic insight.

In Numbers 10:14,15, we discover something interesting about the “sons of Issachar” and the place they occupied in the journeyings of the children of Israel. Whenever that nation marched at the command of the Lord, they did so in a specific order. The tribe of Judah (the people of praise) always went first, leading the way. Immediately after them came the “*tribe of the children of Issachar*” This formation reminded me of a verse in Isaiah 30:21 which says, “*Your ear shall hear a word **behind** you saying, This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right hand and whenever you turn to the left hand.*”

I visualise Judah, leading the nation with the praises of God in their mouths, but followed immediately by the prophetic sons of Issachar who gave directional commands to Judah according to the way in which they discerned God wanted them to proceed.

In the crucial times in which we now live, the church needs prophetic guidance as to the way it should go and the directional changes that ought to be made. This guidance must come through the leadership who ought to be “*2,000 cubits ahead of the people of Israel.*”

Leadership from the top is proper and appropriate to a good command structure. Leadership from the bottom can easily give birth to anarchism in which every man does that which is right in his own eyes. To avoid the remote possibility of this, leaders **MUST** give creative, prophetic leadership to their people by both word and example. The motto of the Israeli Army is “Follow me” based on the concept that the

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officers must always provide forward moving leadership. They must go ahead of their troops, indicate the right direction, set a fine example, and lead their troops to ultimate victory.

Not change for the sake of change

In talking so much about change and its inevitability, I must make it perfectly clear that I am not advocating change for the sake of change. I am certainly not saying that all change is desirable or profitable. Nor am I intimating that all churches must radically change everything and anything. No! Changes must always be initiated by God. But when He clearly indicates the need for certain changes, we must be bold and courageous to make those changes. The church must obediently make room for the Holy Spirit to initiate whatever changes He desires. To resist Holy Spirit initiated change is to condemn oneself to (spiritual) death.

Some change is for the best, some for the worst

Change is an extremely powerful force that is sweeping through our contemporary world. Sir Harold Wilson, a former Prime Minister of Great Britain made a prophetic speech some years ago. He spoke of “The winds of change that are about to sweep the world.” Probably even he did not realise how accurate and meaningful that prediction was, for since that time enormous, irrevocable events of change have transpired around the world. Much of it has been hurtful and detrimental. Many other changes have been positive and beneficial. Change, for better or worse, is inevitable. None but God can halt the tide of change. Many more things will change in our life time. We must stay in tune with God to ensure that the changes in which we are involved are for good and not bad.

The “Winds of Change” are sweeping our world

Prayerful consideration must precede any change

We should never be too eager to change without prayerful thought and consideration. Any prospective changes should first become the subject of earnest prayer for guidance. Once God gives a green light in answer to fervent prayer we must continue prayerfully, only initiating those changes that He clearly intimates. We must however, not hesitate to go forward firmly intending to achieve all that He intimates.

Unity of hearts and minds must precede it. Acts 15:25.

The early church was faced with the challenge of many changes all of which they firstly made the subject of intense prayer. They also brought such issues to a forum of apostles, prophets and teachers in order to gain their united consensus.

Such a situation evolved in Acts 15 concerning the great issue of circumcision or non-circumcision.

V.25. says, “*It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord.*”

V.28. “*for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.*”

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Firstly they sought the mind of the Spirit and then they sought a united consensus of those gathered for this purpose. They were not willing to take any steps or make any changes unless they had a unity of heart and mind on the subject.

One of the most radical and far reaching periods of change in early church history occurred in

Acts 6:1-4

6:1. But with the believers multiplying rapidly, there were rumblings of discontent. Those who spoke only Greek complained that their widows were being discriminated against, that they were not being given as much food in the daily distribution as the widows who spoke Hebrew. 2. So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers.

"We should spend our time preaching, not administering a feeding program," they said. 3. "Now look around among yourselves, dear brothers, and select seven men, wise and full of the Holy Spirit, who are well thought of by everyone; and we will put them in charge of this business. 4. Then we can spend our time in prayer, preaching, and teaching." TLB

A serious problem had arisen that threatened to gravely injure the further growth and development of the early church.

1. The leaders (apostles) recognised and publicly acknowledged the problem.
2. They acknowledged it before the congregation. Acts 6:1-7. They called the multitude of the disciples unto them, the heads of the congregations of Christians in Jerusalem, the principal leading men. The twelve themselves would not determine any thing without them, for in multitude of counsellors there is safety; and in an affair of this nature those might be best able to advise who were more conversant in the affairs of this life than the apostles were.
3. They included and involved the church members in the solution to the problem.
4. They chose and recruited suitable personnel. They therefore desire that seven men might be chosen, well qualified for the purpose, whose business it should be to serve tables, (diakonein)-to be deacons to the tables,
5. They delegated authority to them to undertake the nominated tasks.
6. This was the inauguration of "lay ministry" in the church.

Teaching and explanation must be given

No radical changes should be thrust upon people without first taking the time to teach and fully inform them of all the ramifications involved. Change should never be undertaken lightly. It should never be initiated by the decision of any one individual. The decision to make far reaching changes should be a corporate one reached amongst the multitude of counsellors.

Necessary change must be effected with wisdom and courage

Once a firm decision has been taken in respect of proposed change, the decisions should be implemented with great wisdom and courage. Initiating change usually requires considerable courage and much wisdom.

Healthy change usually comes transitionally, in phases

Occasionally change is ushered in like a whirlwind, but this is not usually the case. More frequently it occurs in stages that are achieved progressively. Healthy growth involves transitional change, e.g. healthy children grow steadily but consistently.

8. Church growth and necessary change

Church growth will inevitably involve changes. Acts 15

Growth always involves processes of change. It cannot occur without doing so. As a living creature grows, it changes. This is inevitable. Any child is a wonderful example of this. In some ways a parent may be sorry to see their child growing out of the baby stage. But actually, any parent would soon become alarmed if those natural changes did not transpire. Growth and change are normal. Lack of them are abnormal.

It is interesting and informative to notice the attitude of the young church to changes necessary for the growth and development of the new Gentile church. Initially their Jewish background cautioned them to impose religious restrictions on the new converts. Gentiles would be required to embrace Jewish traditions. Fortunately, when the issues came before the church council, they prayerfully sought the wisdom of God through the consensus of their members and immediately sent a consoling message to the Gentiles.

Acts 15:24-31

24 *We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said.*

25 *So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul--*

26 *men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

27 *Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing.*

28 *It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements:*

29 *You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell.*

30 *The men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter.*

31 *The people read it and were glad for its encouraging message. (NIV)*

Some very interesting facts emerge from this chapter.

1. The manner in which God was willing to receive the Gentiles.
2. The willingness of the Apostles to consider new perspectives.
3. Their willingness to change their original perceptions.
4. Their willingness to adapt their criteria to new circumstances.

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5. Their eagerness to encourage and console the Gentile converts by sending Judas and Silas.
6. The flexibility of the early church leaders to accept and absorb change.
7. The manner in which the church adapted itself to its new regions of conquest.

A change in church policy and procedure

Acts 6:1-5

1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.

3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them

4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. (NIV)

This incident involved a major re-think and change of church procedure, i.e. the appointment of Deacons.

I am encouraged by several factors.

1. Their openness to new ideas.
2. Their willingness to adapt to meet new circumstances.
3. The greater scope this gave to the Apostles to concentrate on ministry.
4. The quality of converts following this new measure. V7b.
5. How quickly a major problem was solved and crisis averted.
6. The manner in which numerous deacons later became evangelists.
7. The increase in believers in Jerusalem. V.7a.

If your church is not growing, some things undoubtedly need to be changed

Growth is a normal process of every living thing. If no growth occurs, something is radically wrong. The condition is sub-normal and needs to be open to appropriate changes that will stimulate growth. We may offer all manner of excuses and reasons for lack of growth. Some of those reasons may seem to be valid, but often they are really excuses for our unwillingness to face reality and to take the necessary steps to stimulate growth.

We must be willing to ask ourselves some searching questions like :-

- Is the local church functioning and growing spiritually and numerically as it ought to do?
- Is there any room for improvement in the effectiveness of the church?
- What are some of the things that are retarding or preventing growth?
- How can we rectify those problems?
- What changes could be made to improve our effectiveness?

- Why have we not already made those changes?
- How can we modify our attitudes and effect the necessary changes?

Only change can open up new possibilities!

Some changes stimulate growth

There are frequently numerous changes, not necessarily radical, that can immediately stimulate growth. For example, a change of venue, moving into a facility that is more accessible, can initiate growth. A change in the emphasis of our preaching can sometimes bring growth. A change in the atmosphere of our church services can attract many more people. A change in our vision and program can help us to reach many more people. Sometimes it takes only a very small change to achieve a huge difference. For example, a ship may change its course by just two or three degrees, but over several thousand miles that small change will bring it to a completely different destination.

Changes are often needed to sustain growth

Many churches have a problem because of inadequate follow up programs. They are like fishermen with holes in their nets. A number of fish are caught in the net, but soon escape again through those holes. The solution for this is to train numbers of people in effective methods of follow up through which every new visitor to the church, and certainly everyone that makes a commitment to Christ, is faithfully and effectively followed up. Teaching programs for new believers must be conducted.

Changes will transpire as a result of growth

One of the greatest changes that transpired in the early church is recorded in Acts 6:1-7. It came as a result of a crisis occasioned by rapid growth. Some of the new believers were being neglected by the ministrations of the church. The solution was provided by the appointment of deacons and the introduction of delegation of duties.

The Church must be in step with God's purposes

The most important changes that must be made to promote healthy growth are those changes needed to bring us into step with God's present purpose. Find out what God is wanting to do, and do it with Him.

**The art of real progress
is to preserve order *amid* change
and to initiate change *amid* order.**

9. Effective change must be initiated by God

It must be clearly indicated by God

All legitimate changes in the work of God should be initiated by God Himself. In fact, everything we “do” for God should be “birthed” by Him out of our relationship with Him. I am convinced that there are many leaders who are “working for God” on projects that He has never initiated. So our tasks and ministries should be birthed by God and so must any changes that we may make in the fulfilment of those ministries.

Confirmed in God’s Word - often by principles

Before we embark on the path of change we must get solid confirmation through the Bible, the Word of God. We will frequently find that the Bible does not specifically mention the particular subject in which we are interested. However, it does deal with parallel and similar subjects and thereby gives us certain principles that we may apply to the subject in hand. In doing so we must approach the Bible honestly and openly. Not endeavouring to make it say what we want it to say which is called “*handling the Word of God deceitfully.*” (2 Cor 4:2)

Confirmation by a group of several mature leaders

(Divine guidance should always be confirmed by your “brethren”)

We should always seek the guidance of spiritually mature peers. The Bible tells us that “*there is wisdom in the multitude of counsellors.*” (Prov. 11:14; 24:6)

You ignore the wisdom and advice of your counsellors at your own peril.

Paul obviously confirms this principle,

1 Cor 2:16

16 For “*who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?*” But **we** (Gk: *hemeis*, emphatic plural, e.g. “*we ourselves*” have the mind of Christ. (NKJ)

He emphasises the plural, “we” have the mind of Christ intimating that it may require several mature spiritual minds to conceive the mind of Christ.

Circumstantial indications

Once you have begun to move into the processes of change you will discover that circumstances begin to transpire that are circumstantial, i.e. they fall into place, in harmony with the path you have taken. God begins to supply the specific needs. He brings along the right people. Things begin to happen that seem to be coincidental, but they are really God-incidental. God orders the accompanying circumstances of your situation to harmonise with the plans on which you have embarked.

10. Implementing change

Change is always a challenge

Change challenges our security, traditions and our comfort zones, our faith and vision. For some people, conservative and cautious by nature, it is a much greater challenge than for others who are naturally more adventurous and impulsive. Nevertheless, it always constitutes a challenge and we must not be surprised or disconcerted by this. We must boldly face the challenge of inevitable change.

Recognise its inevitability in every area of life

Isa 43:18,19 *“Remember not the former things, neither meditate on the things of old, Behold, I will do a new thing, now shall it spring forth.”*

We cannot escape from the inevitability of change. It is transpiring in every area of life around us. It is unrelenting in its process. We may not like many of the changes, but they are happening anyway. What we must determine is how we should face their challenge. What does God wants us to do in the light of the tremendous changes taking place around us? He certainly does not want us to pretend they are not happening. We must face up to reality, but we must face it in the wisdom, faith and ability of God.

God is not surprised or disadvantaged by the changes. He is not taken unawares by it. He will use all things to the ultimate advantage of His Kingdom purpose. *“All things are working together for good to those that love God and are called according to His purpose.”* (Rom 8:28)

The challenge to change creates crisis

The Chinese word for crisis is composed of two characters. The first is “danger” and the second is “opportunity.” I believe that this is an accurate picture of what crisis truly represents. Firstly there is a prospect of danger which must not be underestimated. However, if we face that crisis with the right attitude it usually opens some tremendous door of opportunity. It is frequently in the context of solving a potential crisis that we experience our greatest achievements. While in some circumstances it may prove risky to change, it is usually even more dangerous not to change.

**Crisis =
danger +
opportunity.**

Fostering the right conditions for change

The vision must be clear, not fuzzy.

It should be ‘spelt out’ clearly and fully.

The implications should be prayerfully considered and fears allayed.

The ministry team should be genuinely convinced and excited.

Persons of maturity should confirm the vision.

Test it before making total commitment.

Adjust it whenever and wherever necessary.

Change is also exciting

Though the prospect of change is often a little scary and foreboding, it is also exciting and stimulating.

Change Is Inevitable To New Possibilities

Embarking on a process of positive change is always a thrill. Embracing the unknown, untried future presents an opportunity for new adventures with God. Israel's conquest of the promised land was filled with exciting and challenging variations. If we are to wholly possess our inheritance in God, it will be the same for us. It will entail a journey of faith into the unknown future. It will require huge changes in ourselves, our perspectives, attitudes and mentality.

**Christians are not supposed to merely to endure change,
nor even to profit by it, but to cause it.**

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

Phases of desirable change.

1. HONEST ASSESSMENT

Review the situation. Make a thorough, honest and responsible investigation.

- Is everything functioning optimally?
- Is everything perfectly satisfactory?
- Is our level of effectiveness the highest possible?
- Can anything be improved, even marginally?

If the answer to any of these is NO, then something ought to change!

2. POSITIVE DECISION.

Deut 2:3

3 Ye have compassed this mountain (Horeb) long enough: turn you northward.

(KJV)

Confess that something has got to change! Make a radical decision.

“Whatever it takes, we are going to succeed!”

- Set your direction
- Identify your mission afresh.
- Set your goals according to your mission statement.

3. DETERMINE APPROPRIATE ACTION

There will be NO change without ***ACTION!***

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Three important phases:

1. Planning stage. **What** are we to do?
2. Strategy phase. **How** will we make it work?
3. Activation. "Just **DO** it!"

4. **RECRUIT AND TRAIN THOSE WILLING TO HELP YOU**

How to identify potential fellow workers.

Enlist the right personnel

Eventually and ideally, you want everyone to become actively involved, but this will not usually happen at once.

- Commence with the visionaries.
- Convince the facilitators.
- Inspire and recruit the functionaries.
- Include the participators.

5. **SHARE THE REWARDS FAIRLY**

1 Sam 30:24

24 " *But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike.*" (NKJ)

King David enunciated the biblical principle of sharing the spoils of victory with those who played their part by remaining at home and looking after the camp. It was not only those who did the actual fighting that were rewarded, it was those also who made it possible for them to fight. Using the analogy of a church. Those who pray and give and play their part in an unseen and often unsung manner, should also enjoy the spoils of victory.

Everyone in a successful company has added something to that success. There is a long chain of personnel involved in any successful enterprise and they should stand together on the winner's dais.

6. **BLENDING THE OLD AND NEW**

An important key to implementing effective change is the ability to blend the old and the new. Re-engineering, is the process of changing and adapting what you already have, adding new features and causing both to work together to their optimum effectiveness.

Matt 13:52

52 *He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."* (NIV)

In order to accomplish this one must exercise the patient skill of blending the old and the new. Change is not the obliteration of the old, totally replacing with a new entity. Change transpires when one element is transformed into a different format. Change

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upgrades, enhances and transforms the old. It does not discard it or relegate it to the rubbish tip.

On several occasions I have witnessed a new pastor, called to shepherd a particular flock. He has hastily instigated radical change to the degree that the original members of that church have left in protest. To lose the original congregation, even for the purpose of raising up a new one, is neither ethical nor wise. Those members who have left have frequently invested years of time and sacrificial giving into that church. It is immoral that they have felt it necessary to leave because the new minister has introduced such radical change. The minister will sometimes seek to justify his action with the adage that “a new broom sweeps clean.” However, that adage is certainly not from the Bible.

If a pastor has such radically different ideas to those of the church he has inherited, he should resign and pioneer another congregation based on his concepts. This would be the honourable and righteous course to take.

7. DECISIVE FOLLOW THROUGH

Once you have started, follow on right through. Nothing is more frustrating than constantly talking of change but never activating the steps necessary to achieve it. Responsible thought and planning must always precede change and this may take some time to work through. However, once the process is commenced, it must be faithfully and vigorously pursued. Half hearted change will not accomplish anything.

8. MONITOR AND MEASURE PROGRESS

Use the loop strategy, make appropriate adjustments. A loop is a means whereby observations, comments and suggestions may be received and considered in order to make necessary “in-flight” corrections. Many times an ultimate target has been missed through lack of necessary adjustments to the strategy and flight plan.

Change is meant to increase effectiveness and productivity. It is meant to achieve positive results. So, we must consistently monitor the results to make sure that this is happening. If those changes effected are not producing the desired result they may need to be modified.

Never be afraid to make necessary modifications to the changes implemented. This is certainly not an indication of failure. It is necessary to have the plans and changes in motion before you can effect the necessary adjustments. In aeronautical terms this is called “in-flight rectification.” Once you are up and moving you need to make certain directional adjustments. But if you never get the plans in motion, you are not going anywhere.

9. LET SUCCESS HUMBLE YOU

Any success we may achieve as Christian leaders is due to God’s Grace operating in our lives. We deceive ourselves if we imagine we can accomplish anything worth while for God except by His marvellous grace. Therefore, to achieve some worthwhile purpose ought to humble one, rather than making one proud.

Too many church leaders in our generation have been dazzled by their own success and allowed themselves to become lifted up with pride. Since pride comes before,

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(leads to) a fall, many powerful leaders have succumbed to the temptations arrayed before high profile people.

1 Pet 5:6

6 *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, (NKJ)*

10. GIVE GOD THE CREDIT AND PRAISE.

Jer 9:23-24

23 *Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:*

24 *But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD. (KJV)*

Moses and the Processes of Change

Moses remains one of greatest “agents of change” in all of world history. He does so because of his leadership in bringing Israel out of Egypt and leading them to Canaan. Without this phenomena, Israel might never have become a nation. He changed the fate and destiny of an entire nation. The path that he trod through the wilderness teaches us many lessons about the processes involved in radical necessary change.

Moses was a leader so inspired by God that he was able to build a united nation from a race of oppressed and weary slaves. In the covenant ceremony at Mount Sinai, where the TEN COMMANDMENTS were given, he founded the religious community known as Israel. As the interpreter of these covenant laws, he was the organizer of the community's religious and civil traditions. His story is told in the Old Testament-- in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

1. His initial concern and desire to change things. Ex 2:11-14.

Moses was born at a time when the Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, had given orders that no more male Hebrew children should be allowed to live. The Hebrew slaves had been reproducing so fast that the king felt threatened by a potential revolt against his authority. To save the infant Moses, his mother made a little vessel of papyrus waterproofed with asphalt and pitch. She placed Moses in the vessel, floating among the reeds on the bank of the Nile River.

By God's providence, Moses-- the child of a Hebrew slave-- was found and adopted by an Egyptian princess, the daughter of the Pharaoh himself. He was reared in the royal court as a prince of the Egyptians: "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" Acts 7:22. At the same time the Lord determined that Moses should be taught in his earliest years by his own mother. This meant that he was founded in the faith of his fathers, although he was reared as an Egyptian Ex. 2:1-10

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Although Moses lived in Pharaoh's court, he was acutely aware of his Jewish origins and of the sufferings they experienced. He sensed a deep desire to help them and deliver them from their bondage.

2. His initial failure. Ex 2:15.

One day Moses became angry at an Egyptian taskmaster who was beating a Hebrew slave; he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand (Ex. 2:12) When this became known, however, he feared for his own life and fled from Egypt to the land of Midian. Moses was 40 years old when this occurred Acts 7:23-29.

Although Moses was well educated and well versed in all the wisdom of Egypt, he was not yet mature enough to deliver Israel. God had much to accomplish in his life before this could happen.

3. He endured 40 years of wilderness isolation.

Despite the fact that Moses had failed miserably in his first attempt at leadership, God had not finished with him. Many successful leaders experience failure in their earliest efforts, yet go on to success. God took him out of commission in order to put him through a school of leadership training.

The Forty Years in the Land of Midian

Moses' exile of about 40 years was spent in the land of Midian where Moses became a shepherd and eventually the son-in-law of Jethro, a Midianite priest. Jethro gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage (Ex. 2:21) and she bore him two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Ex. 18:3-4; Acts 7:29) During his years as a shepherd, Moses became familiar with the wilderness, learning much about survival in the desert. He also learned patience and much about leading sheep. All of these skills prepared him to be the shepherd of the Israelites in later years when he led them out of Egypt and through the Wilderness of Sinai.

The whole forty years was a learning curve for Moses. He learned so many vital lessons that eventually enabled him to turn apparent defeat into glorious victory. Leaders must always be willing to learn from their mistakes and from the mistakes of others.

4. His burning bush experience. Ex 3:2-8.

The challenge of change often requires a new spiritual experience. It requires a new man for a new task. The demands of such leadership responsibilities often makes the leader a much greater person.

Near the end of his 40-year sojourn in the land of Midian, Moses experienced a dramatic call to ministry. This call was given at the BURNING BUSH in the wilderness near the mountain of God. The Lord revealed to Moses His intention to deliver Israel from Egyptian captivity into a "land flowing with milk and honey" which He had promised centuries before to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord assured Moses that He would be with him, and that by God's presence, he would be able to lead the people out.

5. Sharing the vision.

Once that vision has been imparted, it has to be shared. Firstly with one's co-leaders and afterwards with the whole organisation. (church)

a. Sharing with Aaron. Ex 4:14-28. His associate leader

In spite of the assurance of this miraculous sign, Moses was still hesitant to take on this task. He pleaded that he was "slow of speech and slow of tongue" Ex. 4:10, perhaps implying that he was a stutterer or a stammerer. God countered Moses' hesitation by appointing his brother Aaron to be his spokesman. Moses would be God's direct representative, and Aaron would be his mouthpiece and interpreter to the people of Israel. Finally Moses accepted this commission from God and returned to Egypt for a confrontation with Pharaoh.

b. Sharing with the Israelites. Exod 4:27-31

Exod 4:27-31

27 *The LORD said to Aaron, "Go into the desert to meet Moses." So he met Moses at the mountain of God and kissed him.*

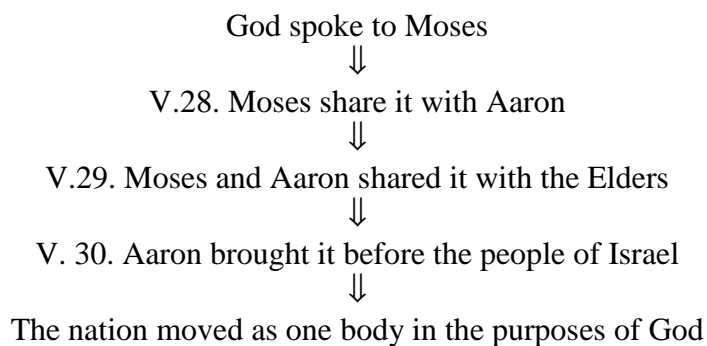
28 *Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform.*

29 *Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites,*

30 *and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people,*

31 *and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped. (NIV)*

Notice the sequence of communication:



6. Encountering resistance

Launching a program of change often results in resistance. This always tests the vision and the visionaries. It is inevitably part of the process of change and one has to successfully negotiate a way through these problems. Soon after his return, Moses stirred the Hebrews to revolt and demanded of Pharaoh, "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness" Ex. 5:1. But Pharaoh rejected the demand of this unknown God of whom Moses and Aaron spoke: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go" (Ex. 5:2) He showed his contempt of this God of the Hebrews by increasing the oppression of the slaves (Ex. 5:5-14) As a result, the people grumbled against Moses Ex. 5:20-21.

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But Moses did not waver in his mission. He warned Pharaoh of the consequences that would fall on his kingdom if he should refuse to let the people of Israel go. Then followed a stubborn battle of wills with Pharaoh hardening his heart and stiffening his neck against God's commands. Ten terrible plagues were visited upon the land of Egypt Ex. (7:14--12:30) the tenth plague being the climax of horrors.

7. Planning and preparation strategy. Ex 12:1-29; Heb 11:28.

Every process of change requires a specific strategy. God's particular strategy at this time was to instigate the Passover, a plan of redemption that pre-figured His greater plan when the Lamb of God would be slain for the redemption of all men.

Heb 11:28

28 Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

(KJV)

8. Activating the Process of Change

No matter how brilliant one's strategy may be, nothing happens until it is implemented. Everything is theory until the moment of application when the plan is finally initiated. Such plans are usually scheduled in phases, e.g.

- a. Leaving Egypt. Works of the flesh. Exodus 12
- b. Crossing the Red Sea. Miriam's rejoicing.
- c. Embarking on pilgrimage. Excited anticipation.
- d. Entering the Promised Land.

9. Meeting inevitable challenges

The path of change is rarely ever smooth and uncomplicated. The process of change is usually challenged again and again. It is in the successful management of these encounters that much of the progress and success is experienced.

Don't ever think that such challenges indicate that you should give up. They are not meant to tell you that you are travelling the wrong way. They merely remind you that the road to success is rarely uncontested. Every victory will advance your cause.

10. Congregational disenchantment

Soon after their departure from Egypt, the Israelites began to grumble and rebel. Some of the leaders of the rebellion were amongst Moses' closest associates. It was only the intimate relationship that Moses now enjoyed with God that enabled him to overcome discouragement and criticism and keep going towards God's ultimate purpose.

11. Leadership thrown upon God again

Every trial presented a new reason why Moses should "cast himself on God afresh." The tests we encounter serve a similar purpose. They are for our refinement, adjustment and fine tuning.

12. Into the Promised Land Josh 1:8-9

8 *"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.*

9 *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Yaresh: Cast out and possess their inheritance) (NAS)*

Encourage full identification with the vision

Explain the purpose and objective thoroughly.

Keep everyone well informed.

Involve the body of people in discussion and planning.

Be open and adaptable to possible need for changes.

Keep their role and involvement constantly before them.

Give due recognition and appreciation whenever appropriate.

Transition usually occurs in stages

Isa 30:21 *"You shall hear a word behind you saying, this is the way, walk in it."*

Isa 28:10 *"Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little."*

The journey into change and transition is very much a walk of faith. Changes introduce elements of uncertainty as we tread new pathways. Faith is like that too. Paul says, *"For we walk by faith and not by sight."* (2 Cor 5:7) The walk of faith is often a step by step experience. We take one step in obedience and as we fulfil that the next step opens up before us. Since the process of change is an exercise of faith, it often follows a similar pattern.

Achieving the objective

Change is only valid if it achieves the desired results. Certain changes are forced upon us and we have no power to resist or stop them. However, we are talking about the kind of changes that are purposely initiated. Such change should only be embraced if it will achieve positive results and fulfil a productive purpose. Change for the sake of change or to be different can often be detrimental.

What I am advocating is the foresight, initiative and courage to undertake changes that are necessary and fruitful. We want to change certain things for good, valid reasons. We want to become more effective. We want to achieve more fruitfulness. We want to be more relevant in our community. We want to be used by God to a greater degree. We want to achieve the objective that God has set for us in life. We want to be as radically dynamic as the early church, turning its world upside down!

The fact is that if all this is not happening right now, then some things need to be changed. Most of us need to be changed in order to be the person that God has truly planned for us to be, but if we are closed to all change, it may never happen. There is no virtue in continuing to do things a certain way because "this is the way we have

**Tradition, is
"the way things
have always been
done."**

always done it.” Neither should we be content merely to maintain the status quo. We have been created and redeemed for higher things. Let’s move on through the processes of change and transformation that will bring us into those things.

Someone has offered this definition of insanity,

**“Insanity is to keep on doing things the same old way
and expecting to achieve a different result.”**

Famous last words

The last words of many churches and organisations have been similar to the following:

“We have never done it that way in this church.”

“That idea will never work in this place.”

“It may be fine for some other church, but it would never work here.”

“I know the people here. They will never accept those changes.”

“We tried something like this before and it didn’t work.”

“Just because everyone else is changing does not mean that we have to.”

“The old ways were good enough for our forebears and they are good enough for us.”

“Those changes will only happen, over my dead body.”

“It will never happen while I am a member of this Board.”

“If that is the way this church is going, I’m leaving.”

11. The Kingdom change

**The manifestation of God’s Universal
Kingdom Rule
will effect more change and transformation
than any event in global history.**

It is also true that the lead up to that most momentous event will cause more changes than have been experienced in any period of human history. A shaking is taking place throughout the world as God predicted it would.

If you are alarmed and fearful because of present changes, fasten your seat belt because. “You haven’t seen anything yet!”

“Yet once more I will shake not the earth only but the heavens...signifying the removing of those that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain...wherefore we shall receive a Kingdom which cannot be moved.” (Heb 12:25-28)

The shaking that God predicted is occurring now and will become much more intense as the Day of the Lord approaches. Everything on earth will be shaken and the heavens too will be shaken. Within the context of this shaking, the Spirit of God will

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be moving in the earth in a greater measure and God will be accomplishing unusual and mighty things in the lives of His people. We must not allow our attention to be directed to those things that God is shaking but to the Lord Himself. He is the source and instigator of the changes that are to happen in the church and in His people. As we steadfastly keep our eyes, our attention and our faith upon Him, He will transform us by His Spirit to become His special people for that day and hour.

God is allowing the shaking in order to wean people, particularly His own people, from their attachment to earthly, material, temporary things. He is allowing the extreme importance of eternal matters to crash in upon the awareness of mankind. He is shaking people and nations free from their absorption with the things of this world.

At this present time those who are yielded to God, and to His purpose for their life, are being changed into His image by the Spirit of the Lord. This is a process of change that transpires little by little as we consistently behold God as in a mirror.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”
Cor 3:18.

The climax of this transformation will be effected when finally we see the Lord face to face.

“When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2.

The Greek New Testament has several words that are translated “new” in our English version. Two of the most frequently used ones are “neos” and “kainos.” Though both are translated “new” their meanings are considerably different.

Neos means new in the sense of recent origin. Something in original condition, neither used nor worn. An illustration of this might be that of a motor vehicle right off the assembly line. No one has yet driven it. No one has even sat in it. It is absolutely brand new.

Kainos is a word that describes something that has been restored to its as new condition. The illustration of this might be of an old car that has been lovingly and carefully restored so that it is as good as new. It looks new. It functions as good as new. But it has actually been renewed to that condition.

This is a word that is frequently used in the New Testament. For example Peter says, *“Nevertheless we, according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth.”* (2 Peter 3:13) The word employed here is “kainos” signifying that the heaven and earth of which God speaks, is not new in the sense of another, different heaven and earth. It is the same, original heavens and earth that will have been freed from the curse and lovingly restored to their “as new” condition.

Nevertheless, tremendous changes will take place when this happens. The most dramatic and amazing changes that mankind has ever witnessed. Sensational

transformations will transpire that will stagger the human imagination as the Lord declares, “*Behold, I make all things new.*” (Rev 21:5)

My friends, tremendous changes lie before us, many of them very difficult to accept. But many other changes lie ahead that will be gloriously achieved by the sovereign hand of God. Changes that will transform this planet into a virtual paradise over which God will directly rule through the Kingly reign of Jesus Christ. So we need to “fasten our seatbelts” and boldly confront the changing future, for out of these earth shaking changes, the Kingdom of our God and His Messiah will emerge.

**God is going to
radically *change*
all things!**

12. It is rarely too late to change

Although many leaders, for a variety of reasons, have steadfastly resisted change, it is rarely too late to change.

Change is inevitable.

Change is transpiring everywhere in the world.

Much change is good and enriches production.

Resistance to change often emanates from self centred pride.

A lack of change often indicates the presence of death.

Progress and improvement can never occur without change.

Changes should be initiated from the leadership

Rise up and confront the challenge to change!

Don't wait too long to change

If you drop a frog into a pan of hot water, the frog will immediately react to the heat by jumping out of the pan. But if you carefully place the same frog in a pan of comfortably cool water, then slowly raise the temperature one degree at a time, the frog will accept this change and stay in the water until the heat kills it.

Many managers, (and churches) are like this. They ignore changes occurring in their environment, and by the time they wake up, they are boiled.

**“Remember not the
former things
neither consider the things of old.
Behold I will do a new thing;
NOW it shall spring forth.”**

Isaiah 43:18,19.

CHECK LIST FOR CHANGE

1: WHEN IS CHANGE DESIRABLE?

When honest investigation and examination reveals areas of effectiveness that could obviously be improved.

When something is clearly out of date and obsolete.

When there is an obvious need for upgrading and updating.

2: WHEN IS CHANGE NECESSARY?

When little real growth or progress is being made and some basic hindrances to growth obviously need to be changed. Such hindrances are usually staring us in the face if we allow ourselves to be honest and unbiased.

3: IS CHANGE ALWAYS NECESSARY?

Changes are usually necessary at regular intervals because we live in a changing world society with which we need to keep pace. People are conditioned to certain things and can only "hear" us when we communicate in the appropriate language and mode.

4: WHEN MIGHT CHANGE BE INADVISABLE?

If something is working effectively at the peak of its potential, and honest examination reveals that there are no areas that can be improved by modification or change, then change would be inadvisable.

Ask yourselves honestly which areas and functions of our church ministry are working so effectively and productively that there is absolutely no requirement for change or adjustment? Which aspects are working so well that no improvement is required?

Make a list of those aspects.

Which aspects of our church life could be improved and how may this be achieved?

Make another list.

5: WHAT KIND OF CHANGES ARE ADVISABLE?

Changes that encourage and effect spiritual growth and maturity.

Changes that facilitate greater unity in the Body.

Changes that increase effectiveness and efficiency.

Changes that increase opportunities for true fellowship.

Changes that bring our activities up to date with our environment.

Changes that improve harmonious relationships.

Changes that increase growth and productivity.

Changes that enable us to impact and change our society.

6: WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF CHANGE?

The process of change usually involves certain basic factors :-

- Let qualified and mature persons honestly examine the current situation.
- Recognise and candidly acknowledge any aspects that could be improved.
- Give corporate prayerful and positive consideration to possible improvements.
- Prayerfully anticipate Spirit inspired creative thinking.
- Infuse enthusiasm for effective and productive changes.
- Initiate positive changes.

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- Appraise and adjust the application of change.
- Confirm and consolidate the new direction.

7: IS CHANGE ALWAYS PAINFUL?

Change is invariably but not inevitably painful. The pain of change usually arises from stubborn resistance to it. Unfortunately most people prefer the security of the known and familiar.

Change thrusts us into the unknown and untried.

Change makes extra demands upon people.

Changes introduce elements of risk.

Introducing positive changes usually increases our work load.

8: HOW CAN WE MINIMISE THE PAIN OF CHANGE?

By ensuring that everyone involved thoroughly understands the benefits of the changes.

By conferring with everyone affected, through the thinking and planning stages.

By patiently gaining a consensus for change.

By "looking before you leap." Responsibly consider the probable effects.

By endeavouring to help everyone feel they are part of the change.

By effecting the changes together with other responsible persons.

By effecting the changes with careful confidence.

By monitoring the transition for possible modifications.

By keeping everyone informed of improved performance as a result of the changes.

9: IS THERE ANY ALTERNATIVE TO CHANGE?

Difficult as the prospect of change may appear, the alternative is even more painful. The alternative to change is stagnation, lack of development and growth, ultimate death.

10: CHANGE OPENS THE WAY TO IMPROVEMENT.

Initiating change overcomes inertia and stagnation and gets the vehicle moving. Once mobile, it becomes easier to head in the direction of improvement, greater effectiveness and development. Determine to change what needs to be changed and begin to move on towards better times.