

Simple Solutions to Complex Problems

We live in a world of problems. The purpose of this series has been to provide us with simple solutions to complex problems. One of the problems that we face constantly is that of change. When we finally get to the place that we think that we have just about figured something out, that thing changes, and we go back to block number one. That can be very frustrating. No wonder Mark Twain once said,

“The only person who likes change is a wet baby.”

As much as we might not like change, it is here to stay. It is part of the fabric that makes this world what it is. Change is inevitable. You can know that by simply looking in the mirror. You're not the same person you were two years ago. The color of your hair, if you're older, has probably changed, either by your own hand, or time's hand. Life is a series of changes.

Ecclesiastes 1:1-8, “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven. A time to give birth, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to tear down, and a time to build up. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and a time to dance. A time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, and a time to shun embracing. A time to search, and a time to give up as lost; A time to keep, and a time to throw away. A time to tear apart, and a time to sew together; A time to be silent, and a time to speak. A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace.

All of those verses are saying one thing loud and clear-there are going to be changes in your life, and some of those changes are going to come faster than you would like for them to.

How do people commonly deal with change?

1. **PEOPLE Fear Change.**

Sometimes, it's really not the change that bothers us as much as not knowing what that change will produce. We are afraid of the unknown. What we have now may not be good, and we may not like it. But at least we know what we've got. On the other hand, we are afraid of the unknown. One therapist said some people prefer the certainty of misery rather than the misery of uncertainty.

2. PEOPLE Resist change

Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time. What we want is for things to remain the same but get better (Sidney Harris). So, we resist change.

For example, when the pioneers of radio evangelism started using the airwaves to proclaim the Gospel, they were heavily criticized. Why? They were criticized because the Scripture says that Satan is the prince of the power of the air, and God certainly would not use Satan's domain to do God's work.

When the famous evangelist, George Whitfield, began to preach in the fields, the clergy denounced him because they said preaching was to be done in the church building.

When Isaac Watts began writing hymns, he was greatly opposed for this new music style.

Imagine surgery before the day of anesthesia. Patients were strapped down while scalpel and saw cut through tissue and bone. Every turn of the knife caused unbelievable and unimaginable pain. One Christian doctor named Sir James Young Simpson determined to do something about it. After many attempts and failures, he finally came up with something that worked. People can now undergo surgery while under anesthesia. What a blessing! Well, not to some. Simpson was attacked by fellow Christians who claimed that pain was a God-ordained part of life. They said that freedom from pain comes only in heaven, and it was immoral to devise ways of escaping it on earth.

3. PEOPLE Resent CHANGE

Change threatens us with the giving up of certain rights or privileges or at least arousing us from comfortable routines. We don't want what is familiar to us to be disrupted. And the older you get and the longer you have done something a certain way, the harder it is for you to change.

4. PEOPLE Run From CHANGE

People retreat back into an old mode and focus on how the past was. Many people have a tendency to pray that yesterday will become tomorrow. As much as we may not like it, change is going to happen. In fact, there are times when we need to initiate change. There are times when we need to be the one to make it happen.

How do I know if I should make a change?

1. IS THERE A NEED?

There is a good example of a need that brought about change in the history of the early church. After the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, many of those who had gone to Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost stayed longer than they had expected to. That meant that many people who brought only enough food to take them through the feast days, would need food. The task was huge, and the apostles couldn't handle it by themselves. Not only were some of the widows being neglected, in the process of trying to feed the widows, the apostles were not able to preach and teach as they should. Something needed to be done in order to meet the changing needs of the Church, and the answer was to change the way they provided food.

Acts 6:2-3 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. 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."

When you can no longer do what needs to be done well with a current method, the method needs to be changed, and that will happen over and over again in a growing family, a growing business or a growing church.

Successful people are willing to change with the times. People who will not change will likely fail. Ralph Nabor once wrote a book entitled THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF THE CHURCH - "We've never done it that way before."

In the 1800's the Shaker's had colonies all over New England, but today, only one colony-the New Gloucester, Maine colony-is still active, and it has only eight Shakers keeping the "old way." At one time, the Shakers were on the cutting edge of progress and technology. In fact, they were inventors. But at some point, they stopped developing and changing. And some day soon, they will only be a memory. People who are not willing to change will not grow. Neither will organizations.

In 1982, the book In Search of Excellence reported on 43 of the "best run" companies in America. Only two years later, 14 of those 43 firms were in financial trouble. The reason, according to a Business Week study: "failure to react and respond to change."

2. IS THERE A PROBLEM?

Problems are different than needs. Needs can sometimes go unmet, but problems, if left alone, will probably do serious damage. A need is something that we would like to deal with. A problem is something that we must deal with, and all people, all families and all churches have both needs and problems. We can turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to those things, but they will not go away. Many times the only answer to fixing a problem is to change something.

3. IS THERE A BETTER WAY TO DO WHAT WE ARE DOING?

There is no question about the fact that God is a God of excellence. When he created the heavens and the earth and all that is in the universe, he did not say, "I guess it's good enough." He created everything in absolute perfection. Since we represent him, we can never come to the place where we say of our lives or of our church, "I guess is good enough." We are never to be satisfied with something that is good. We must seek to make it better.

4. WILL THIS CHANGE CONTRADICT SCRIPTURE?

The way that you do something should change when there is a need to change, but God's eternal Word should never be compromised in the process.

Galatians 1:8-9, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"

Those are pretty strong words, but they let us know how God feels about compromise when it comes to his word. Nothing will ever be made better if it contradicts the Word of God. When we decide how to lead our families, we do not do so on the basis of the advice of the most popular pediatrician who has just written his latest book on how to raise children. It is the Bible that gives us our direction.

When we decide how to run our business, it is not on the basis of what seems to be most advantageous financially. Our business practices must be based upon the Scripture. If the change you are thinking about making contradict Scripture, don't do it.

What a must I do in order to make difficult changes?

1. I MUST BE WILLING TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE

I must look at my life and the changes that I am asked to make through the lens of Scripture rather than through the comfort of experience.

2. I MUST BE WILLING TO FAIL

I would like to tell you that all changes that are made are successful. The truth is; they are not. Some of the best thought through plans fail. That's why change is so threatening. We are afraid of failing. In the next few weeks and months, we will institute some changes in our church that will take us from the comfort of the usual to the discomfort of the new, and there is no guarantee that those changes will accomplish all that we want him to. The truth is, however, that if we don't risk failure, we will fail by default. If we are to be fruitful, we must pray for wisdom and the courage to move forward believing that we are being guided by the unseen hand of the living God.

3. I MUST FOCUS ON THE MISSION NOT THE CHANGE

As God's people, we are to be consumed with the mission that is given to us to make disciples. When I moved to Houston to start this church, the change that was before me was not easy. I was leaving everything for nothing. I was leaving a wonderful church family that loved me for a city that knew nothing about me and didn't care to know anything about me. I was leaving financial security for financial insecurity. Why would I do such a thing? I was focusing on the mission. I saw a church in my heart where people who were living apart from God could come to know him and learn his ways. I saw the vision of going from an attendance and membership of absolute zero to a spiritual family that was united in the love of God. When we left sugar land and moved to Katy, we took another huge risk, but we did it in order to fulfill the mission. When we move out on our land, will face problems that we don't face here. Why do we keep pushing? Why don't we just settle down and rest? It's because we have a mission, and that the mission drives us to risk failure for the privilege of bringing glory to God in fulfilling his dream for us. If we focus on the unwanted change that brings the risks, we will do very little. It is the mission that lifts us up out of mediocrity and propels us on to success.

3. I MUST FIND STRENGTH IN THE THINGS THAT NEVER CHANGE

II Corinthians 4:18, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

If we are going to learn how to handle change, then we need to focus our mind's attention on what will never change.

a) God's Love for You does not change

The Bible teaches me that God loves me, no matter what. God loves me if I have a bad hair day just the same as if I have a great attitude. God's love is based upon grace, and it is consistent.

Romans 8:35-39 says: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Sometimes we feel the changes are coming too quickly in our life and when they do, we have a tendency to feel lonely and even hopeless. It is wonderful to know that God loves you. His love is like a powerful light that no darkness can put out.

There is an old hymn whose words go like this: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee." No matter how threatening the changes in your life may be, you can always hide yourself in the one whose love for you never fails.

b) God's Word does not change

Isaiah 40:6-8: "...All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

The French Philosopher, Voltaire, many years ago, once said in his own home, "The Bible, in a hundred years from this day, will be an obsolete book." Today the building that was once his house is now a warehouse for the British Bible Society in France?

Fellowship Bible Church
Pastor: Don Griffin

The stability of our life is not to be based upon who is on TV and who is on the radio and what they say in the newspaper. The stability of our lives are based on God's Word.

Another old song: "I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future."
Our future is secure as long as we're willing to put it in the hands of God.