

Embracing Change

Message 01 of the series "Changing for the Better"

I. Change is a natural part of life.

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to harvest. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to cry and a time to laugh. A time to grieve and a time to dance. A time to scatter stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to turn away. A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear and a time to mend. A time to be quiet and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate. A time for war and a time for peace... God has made everything beautiful for its own time." Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 (NLT)

Life Application: It is a mark of wisdom to know what, when and how to change.

"From the tribe of Issachar, there were 200 leaders of the tribe with their relatives. All these men understood the signs of the times and knew the best course for Israel to take." 1 Chronicles 12:32 (NLT)

II. Change is at the heart of what it means to follow Jesus.

a. Through salvation God changes our status.

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5:24 (NIV)

"God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir." Galatians 4:5-7 (NLT)

b. Through the ongoing process of sanctification God changes our heart and character.

"This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT)

"Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ."

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NLT)

Note: Spiritual growth is impossible without change.

"Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?"

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (NLT)

Life Application: Surrendering our lives to the Lord and trusting Him to grow us should be our delight.

"Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you." Psalm 37:3-5 (NLT)

III. We can choose today how we will respond to changes that are coming our way this year.

a. We can choose to thank God for the blessings he will give us.

"Let all that I am praise the LORD; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things he does for me. He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. He fills my life with good things." Psalm 103:1-5 (NLT)

- b. We can choose to rejoice that God will mature us through hardships and difficulties.

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:2-4 (NIV)

- c. We can choose to obey when God corrects us.

For the LORD disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child. As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?
Hebrews 12:6-9 (NLT)

- d. We can choose to depend on the Lord to guide us.

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you. Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.” Psalm 32:8-9 (NIV)

“God arms me with strength, and he makes my way perfect. He makes me as surefooted as a deer, enabling me to stand on mountain heights.” Psalm 18:32 (NLT)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. What unexpected changes came your way last year? What changes are you expecting this year?
2. Why does God want to see change happen in our lives? Have you ever considered if the change is for Him or us? Why are these changes so hard?
3. Read James 1:2-4. What is your typical response when difficulties happen to you? Based on this passage, how should your attitude be when trouble comes into your life?
4. Read Philippians 2:5. Paul states that we should have the same attitude of Christ. How does a believer accomplish this? (*the key is found in verse 13*)
5. Have you ever considered that the message of the Gospel is change?
6. Read the following passages: Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 9:25; Romans 6:18. Why is change so important to God?
7. What are some areas in your life you feel God is wanting to change?

Quotations to consider:

“Without a struggle, there can be no progress.” Frederick Douglass

“Whether you think you can or think you can't - you're right.” Henry Ford

“I'm in favor of progress; it's change I don't like.” Mark Twain

“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart.” Ezekiel 36:26 (NLT)